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Meghan Sickler

Final M.Ed. Self-Study Portfolio

M.Ed. Teacher Leadership

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Certificate of Graduate Study in Educational Technology

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Rowan University: College of Education

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1. Introduction

As a sixth and seventh grade English-Language Arts teacher, I stand firmly in the belief that all students are able to learn and be successful both academically and socially with the proper support. I believe in teaching to the whole child and that every aspect of his or her character contributes to his or her learning in my class and in life. I believe that all instructional decisions are right if for the benefit of the students. My agency as a classroom leader is utilized to provide what my students need to feel comfortable and confident in standing on their own, conducting research, vocalizing their beliefs, and supporting their thoughts with facts and evidence. As a member of the GMS community, I believe that our connection to our community is our biggest asset. I believe that our diversity is one of our many strengths, and tapping into the culture of our students and the community positively impacts our school climate. Connecting with families strengthens the support system students have and increases engagement with our community. As a teacher leader, I assume responsibility over my students, my staff, and my school community. I utilize my agency and knowledge to enact the most positive change to impact the most students possible. I believe that with collaboration, training, and opportunity, we can rise to any challenge and overcome any obstacle.

This portfolio is a representation of my leadership journey and how my courses, assignments, and experiences have contributed to the leader I am today in my classroom, in my school, and in my community.

2. Portfolio Assignment 1 Reflection: Domain I

Indicators: The teacher leader understands the principles of adult learning and knows how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust, and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning.

- 1. Utilizes group processes to help colleagues work collaboratively to solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict, and promote meaningful change.*

Domain I focuses on a teacher leader's understanding of adult learning in relation to how to improve instruction and positively affect student learning. In addition, this standard addresses the ways in which teacher leaders build collaboration, respect, and trust amongst colleagues to continually improve for the sake of the students. There is an emphasis placed on building relationships and rapport with staff members to improve the overall culture; however, this standard does not stop solely at collegiality. Teacher leaders use communication skills as well as grouping and facilitation skills to encourage teachers to work together to solve school-wide challenges and initiatives, to make informed decisions, and promote meaningful change in learning environments as well as throughout the school (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

As I continue to adapt my role as a seventh grade ELA teacher, I must continue to utilize my colleagues as assets in my personal growth as well as serve as a resource to them during their journeys as well. A useful source of information I had found during this program focused on teacher collaboration while working in PLCs to create school-wide impact. That, I feel, speaks volumes to the facts of a teacher leader. Rather than a focus on the learners, this article focuses exclusively on how a functioning PLC improves teachers' knowledge of their content, pedagogy

of teaching, and overall effectiveness for school-wide success (Feldman 2020). As a teacher, I am aware that working with others will ultimately improve my classroom strategies by providing me with resources, allies with whom to bounce ideas, and objective eyes that can identify ways to improve that I cannot see. Each teacher is a carrier of practices, and when placed in the PLC, the practices become a part of an ongoing collaborative dialogue; the work is no longer to benefit just one teacher (Sickler_MA2_METL50516). Collegiality and the collaborative promotion of meaningful change can best be illustrated in my work completed with W. Anshelewitz, C. Clifford, and E. Iannotta in the design of a professional learning community rubric. Each level of this task provided the opportunity to rely on colleagues, build on each other's ideas, trust in each other's knowledge and experiences, and celebrate accomplishments as a team. My team and I respected each other personally and professionally, supported each other in and outside of the online classroom, and worked toward the common goal together (Group3_MA1_METL50511).

2. *Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating, and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning.*

The Teacher Leadership program afforded me many opportunities to work in collaborative settings, and, as a result, it has instilled in me the importance of how teachers communicate with one another in order to achieve a common goal. For many of my courses, the common goal may have been completing an assignment or passing the course. In the aforementioned group project centered on PLCs, my three colleagues and I were gathered together for being some variation of middle school teachers. Although we do not teach the same disciples, work in the same districts, or live in the same parts of the state, we were able to align our goals and work together for the good of the team. We communicated using multiple means to

be mindful of each other's hectic schedules, familial obligations, and out-of-school lives. We each were responsible for a section of the document (Group3_MA1_METL50511), had the opportunity to lead the weekly group Google Meet, and listened to one another. We edited with constructive feedback and revised with kindness, keeping in mind that we were working together to achieve the same goal.

These leadership functions are evident in my daily life outside of Rowan as well as within the program. When working as the co-director for the school musical, I collaborate with six other individuals for the best interest of our students and school community. We are a collection of teachers of different ages, disciplines, and years of experience. When approaching a decision for the show or sharing a personal situation, I know it's vital to push any personal opinions or biases aside and listen carefully, empathize genuinely, and comment meaningfully to help our group maintain its positive and productive nature. Working with teachers of different experiences has proven to be a huge asset for me, and I know that two minds - or seven - are far better than one.

To support my understanding of the importance of modeling the aforementioned skills in order to work toward shared goals, I reviewed an article regarding the impact of teacher collaboration as professional development in a suburban area. Williams identified that "it is not the dynamic leader that brings about positive changes in a school, it is the collaborative structures for success that maintain a press for ambitious teaching and academic achievement" (2010). This supports my understanding of this domain and my personal view that "it takes a village" to truly create positive change. Additionally, she continued to identify how collaborative interactions are integral for overall school reform. She concluded, "Educational leadership

involves the practices of multiple individuals and occurs through the complex network of relationships and interactions among the entire staff of the school.” (2010).

3. *Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, build ownership and action that supports student learning.*

Trust is an essential part of collegial relationships, and such trust is vital for teacher leaders to display in order to assist colleagues in supporting student learning. I embody this function daily through my position as a Teacher Leader of Data for the ELA department in my school. While looking at the data, I focus on the numbers rather than the students or the teachers. As I disseminate information to teachers, I stress the vertical nature of our standards and curricula to emphasize that each score is not the responsibility of one teacher but rather our whole department. We work together to create change, and we face challenges together as well. In doing so, I’ve built trusting relationships with my peers through emphasizing that we are in this together. Modeling empathy and understanding while assisting all ELA teachers in claiming ownership of our data has helped to strengthen our department and prepare us to meet the next challenge. I have assisted in leading the team to debunking the standards, identifying strengths and areas for growth, collaborating on launch guides to address skill deficiencies, and have contributed to our overall team vision for improvement.

4. *Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges.*

Inclusivity is a major goal in my building as it is in my own classroom. Inclusiveness is the first step towards equity for all students. As a teacher leader, it is my responsibility to serve as an ally and a support system for all students, especially those in ostracized demographics or subgroups within the student population. For my inquiry project that began in Teacher

Leadership in Practice and concluded in Agency in Teacher Leadership, I aimed to address a section of my student population that often goes unnoticed. There was an identifiable and distinct disconnect between low-income families and the amount of involvement and engagement established with the school community. I had concluded through my research that living below the poverty threshold added additional stressors, and as these stressors increase, families face difficulties in finding the monetary resources to address what impacts the students (Sickler_Assignment1p1_METL50514). Add parenting styles as well as parental expectations, and students will inevitably face struggles in meeting academic expectations. My research into SES and student achievement also addressed the effects of low expectations placed on students from parents, teachers, and the students themselves. That being said, these students deserve the same opportunity to learn and thrive in our building as those from other areas of our town receive. I used and continue to use the work completed in these two courses to help develop ways to communicate with all families and strengthen relationships with the community in the hopes of increasing engagement. I utilized this data within our school's Diversity Committee to begin planning events focused on addressing this subgroup of our population. Events that followed included the Saturday Resource Fair, the Hispanic Heritage Night, and the Black History Month Family Night. Some students may face more challenges than others, many of which are beyond their control; these students deserve the equity and opportunity to thrive.

5. *Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages to promote effective interactions among colleagues.*

As of April of 2021, my school consisted of approximately 38% of students identifying as Hispanic, 35% identifying as white, 18% identifying as African American, 5% identifying as multicultural, 3.5% identifying as Asian, and the remaining percentage representing other

cultures or representing a student not identifying with one particular background (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). This being said, diversity is grossly underrepresented amongst our staff members. This has created additional challenges when aiming to connect with families in our community as well as promote engagement between the school and local community. Our local community members speak a combination of English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole, with a growing population representing Eastern European nations. Although my heritage does not lend itself to relating to these cultures, I know the responsibility I have as a teacher and teacher leader to work that much harder to connect with those different from me. I communicate daily with parents and families through multiple means in their token languages, attend sporting events, translate work into multiple languages during after school tutoring, and volunteer at local events to demonstrate the value I place in the cultures of my students. My role as a teacher leader in my building is to embrace the diversity of my students and honor it amongst my staff. While we may not have the most diversity on our team, we view our students as an extension of our families, and in modeling and promoting involvement and positive interactions with my students, their families, and the community, I continue my work in bettering our school climate and culture.

3. Portfolio Assignment 2 Reflection: Domain II

Indicators: The teacher leader understands how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices and improves teaching and learning. The teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers' ongoing learning and development.

1. *Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning.*

This domain focuses on the collection and application of data to improve teacher practice and student learning. With extensive knowledge of data analysis, teacher leaders assist colleagues in finding appropriate means to collect data and assess it to address their areas of inquiry. In leading by example, teacher leaders begin to create a culture of questioning, researching, and analyzing to best inform practices. Within this domain, teacher leaders share knowledge of analyzing data with colleagues (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

As a teacher leader, I find it vital to look at all sides of a problem before coming to a decision on the best course of action. When considering students, "research" relates to far more than test scores. I have taken extensive time reflecting on school demographics, achievement levels, socioeconomic status of the area, "feeder school" locations, and so on to begin establishing the narrative of the current student population. In addition, I rely on my own experiences in this same town to drive my inquiry in order to determine how I can best help my students and help my colleagues do the same. For my inquiry project, I had noticed trends in changes within my town that I felt played a negative role in the lives of my students. For

example, in 2000, as I finished elementary school, the poverty rate in our town was 4.2% of the population, representing 3,600 people. In 2010, as I continued studying in community college, the poverty rate was 5.9% of the population, representing 5,200 people. In the most recent census count, the poverty rate was an all time high of 7.9%, identifying that approximately 7,000 people live below the poverty line. While this may seem like a small fraction of a very large town, I see the impact these statistics have on my students daily. I've observed a decrease in preparedness for an incoming year, lack of participation from the students, and an overall decrease in familial involvement (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50513). I took this knowledge and used it as a starting point to establish the correlation between families taking time to engage with the school community and students' long term success rates.

At the conclusion of my inquiry project, I turn-keyed the information to my administration as well as my colleagues. We held open forum discussions to determine how to move forward and how we can better enhance parental engagement in a COVID-19 world. I used my project - and continue to use my project - to model for many of my colleagues how the narrative of each student extends beyond what we see in our classrooms. When we best know the students that sit in front of us, we can direct our instruction towards their needs and provide them with the best educational experiences.

2. Facilitates the analysis of student learning data, collaborative interpretation of results, and application of findings to improve teaching and learning

In an article for the University of Northern Iowa, John Henning addresses the current status of standardized data in education. "Consonant with the increasing public pressure on schools to increase student achievement has been the increasing use of standardized achievement test scores to inform instruction and curriculum. For example," he argued, "test makers suggest

that by comparing the student, classroom, or building scores with local and national norms, teachers can identify individual or group strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of adjusting the curriculum” (2004). While I find that standardized testing data is not the end all and be all to understand student achievement, it does provide a starting point to begin developing the narrative of the student. When working with teachers to understand the data that we have available, I make sure to convey that message. This data is not the entire story; it simply starts us off at Chapter 1.

In close collaboration with our technology and testing staff in the district, I have spent many hours working on school platforms pulling, organizing, and analyzing school-wide data for state assessments, district benchmark platforms, and department benchmark assessments, as well as non-academic data sources such as attendance and free and reduced lunch status. Once the team and I had collected our findings, it was our responsibility to make meaningful connections between the data and our staff. *How could this information help everyone? What can they do with this information? How does this impact student learning in x, y, and z classes?* The next step of our process was to turnkey our findings (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50513).

We would present our material to our staff members and all stakeholders under the premise that we were working to reach a universal goal. In many instances, our goal was to help remove our school from being identified as a “school in need of improvement” under ESSA. This is when the dialogue began. Teachers were able to attend Edcamp-style meetings focused on their specific questions as well as data tutorials and professional development sessions. Our colleagues would frequently stop by our classrooms with questions or ask if we could review data with them to ensure they are taking away the right conclusions to inform their instruction. As I continue to assist my colleagues as the Teacher Leader of Data for the ELA department, I can see that the focus on data driven instruction, collaboration, and the “all for one” mentality

has greatly impacted and improved the emphasis on student learning and has increased overall student achievement.

3. Supports colleagues in collaborating with the higher education institutions and other organizations engaged in researching critical educational issues

As a teacher leader in my building, I seek any opportunity I can to better myself and find ways that I can help assist others. In the spring, my chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International met as a chapter (Gamma) to support each other's educational endeavors. One of the purposes of DKG is "to stimulate the personal and professional growth of members and to encourage their participation in appropriate programs of action" (Delta Kappa Gamma Society International n.d.). At this particular gathering, a guest speaker provided information regarding social and emotional learning, leadership, building culture, and self-preservation during times of crisis. We, a group of educators of all ages, grades, and disciplines across Mercer County, collaborated, shared stories, and provided suggestions on how to positively impact our schools. I brought this information back to my PLC soon after to discuss how we, the seventh grade ELA team, could create positive change within our classrooms and impact the morale and culture of not only our hall but our building as well. I use my position as a DKG member and a teacher leader to bring outside resources, research, and information into my classroom, B-Hall, and all of GMS in the effort to positively impact others. Sharing Mr. Billy's approach to coping in the chaos has proven to be extremely beneficial as of late, as many of us are still dealing with the aftermath of the heart of the pandemic. Ultimately, my access to information and willingness to exchange information with others throughout my building are driven by the notion that together, we can achieve anything.

4. Teaches and supports colleagues to collect, analyze, and communicate data from their classrooms to improve teaching and learning

This facet of Domain II connects directly to the ideals and attributes of a functioning PLC. Van Lare had once questioned, “What counts as learning, and how do we know it when we see it?” (2013), and upon reading this, I instantly connected the idea of data driven instruction and having concrete evidence of the success of the students. Learning looks different to every teacher, as do success and failure. The object that brings us all together is data. To determine if a goal is being met, such as if the seventh grade can adequately write based on a specific standard, PLC members need to establish an objective way to determine a student’s level of achievement and understanding of a task at hand to gauge the growth being made as a result of the PLC implications and work together to review the data created to make meaningful adjustments to the learning process. This objective analysis will lend itself to the cross curricular nature of PLCs, making growth and achievement relative to all subject areas and in all classrooms (Sickler_MA3_METL50511).

In many cases, teachers are able and willing to collect data but are not knowledgeable on how to read the data as well as what to do with it. Teacher leaders use opportunities such as these to bring colleagues together to explore findings from the assessment given, collaboratively determine what the results mean, and create a plan to then apply the knowledge gained from the data collection to improve instructional strategies. Additionally, teacher leaders provide scaffolding and support for colleagues as they continue to work through the data analysis process from their learning activities to improve instruction (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513). I have assumed this approach when discussing the iReady diagnostic test and lessons with my colleagues. As one of two identified teachers as the “iReady Champions” in the building, it is my

responsibility to serve as a liaison between staff, administration, and the instructional technology team regarding the program, its data, and our implications for positive change. In November of 2019, my fellow “Champion” and I hosted a district-wide professional development session on how to access, read, and apply the iReady program and its data to the middle school classroom. We were able to bring teachers from all three middle schools in the district together to commiserate over struggles, determine areas of weakness, and create action plans on how to improve starting that very day. It is because of this camaraderie and collaboration that each teacher left our professional development session with a better understanding of data and instructional practices. That, to me, is the ultimate goal of a teacher leader.

4. Portfolio Assignment 3 Reflection: Domain III

Indicators: The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

- 1. Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards, and linked to school/district improvement goals.*

Domain III addresses the teacher leader's role in consistently promoting continued professional growth for themselves as well as colleagues that aligns to school improvement goals. To do so, teacher leaders first collect and use data about adult learning to address the diverse needs of colleagues. Teacher leaders determine what colleagues need to be successful and find ways to facilitate professional learning through differentiation and collaboration. Their work doesn't end at helping the research begin. Teacher leaders continue to work in partnership with colleagues to now apply skills of data collection and analysis to professional learning and its impact on teaching and student learning. This work is done meaningfully and is continually reflected upon and revisited. For this to happen, teacher leaders work with administrators for sufficient time for colleagues to work with each other, work with data, and engage in professional learning directed toward a schoolwide goal or initiative. Throughout this process, teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen practices. In doing so, teacher leaders

are enabling their colleagues to make necessary positive changes to increase the learning of students (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

Collaboration amongst colleagues is a key factor in a school's success. Doing so based on data analysis truly drives home a common language amongst teachers as well as works toward a common goal. When Van Lare had questioned, "What counts as learning, and how do we know it when we see it?" (Van Lare, 2013, p.377) I instantly connected the idea of data driven instruction and having concrete evidence of the success of the students. Learning looks different to every teacher and in every classroom. For instance, my current supervisor provided all English teachers with a benchmark to administer and asked teachers to score such writing on a 0-1-2-3 scale. Following the administration and scoring of the benchmarks, she proceeded to state that one teacher is "harder" than another, ignoring the differences in student populations and what each teacher was aiming to see from her students in their writing. To determine if our goal was being met, the goal of having the seventh grade adequately write based on a specific standard, we as a PLC needed to establish an objective way to determine a student's level of achievement and understanding of a task at hand to gauge the growth being made as a result of our PLC implications. This objective analysis lent itself to the cross curricular nature of PLCs in our building, making growth and achievement relative to all subject areas and in all classrooms. We were able to take our data to the science and social studies teachers to provide baseline data for their work, suggestions for writing tasks, ways to monitor students as they wrote using our intended format, and how to grade the written responses (Sickler_MA3_METL50511). This inclusivity and team focus was and continues to be important for all stakeholders to help one another reach the established goals, and we, as a seventh grade ELA, team modeled such for our colleagues.

2. *Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning.*

Throughout my research into the benefits of professional learning communities, it quickly became apparent that diversity amongst staff members is a huge asset. Diversity in this sense relates to heritage, gender, belief system, needs, priorities in education, years of experience, and so on. To further such understanding, I researched the implications of diversity in a PLC setting. Wiseman, Arroyo, and Richter instantly identified that diversity can be a powerful, unifying force. “Diversity,” as they continued, “embraces all aspects of the school, including culture and subcultures, perspectives and viewpoints, ways of thinking, and personal idiosyncrasies - hence its unifying possibilities” (2013). I would be remiss to mention something Wiseman et al.’s research identified: the creative tension established as a result of diversity. All teachers approach challenges with different perspectives, and this has the potential to make a collaborative situation difficult with other adults. However, as I’ve learned through the work with my colleagues over the past six years, diversity in age, experience, background, and beliefs create what Wiseman et al. call “a certain degree of disruption of fixed patterns of thinking and self-interested posturing if the path to do a better future is to be plotted” (2013). These differences force adults to think outside of the pre-established box. As a member of my school’s School Improvement Panel, I have had the pleasure of enduring this “disruption” as new members joined the team and brought new perspectives, strengths, and challenges to the table. New eyes, new needs, new ideas, and new perspectives continued to make us better, and that allowed us as a panel to uncover ways to make our school better as a result.

My work with our school's Diversity Committee over the past three years has embodied these attributes to not only impact the staff; we have developed events to benefit the community and have inspired the creation of a student driven Diversity Club. As a team of teachers, assistants, and administrators, we discussed what diversity meant to us and what was most important for each of us to honor our own diversity. This laid the foundation for how we approached the multiple community-based activities that we facilitate each year. We approached each event - the Hispanic Heritage Night, the Black History Month Family Night, and the World Fair - cognizant of the importance of celebrating the cultural differences and diversity in our area to honor cultures and educate about the heritage in our local community.

3. Facilitates professional learning among colleagues.

As a teacher leader, one assumes the responsibility of the professional development and learning of all staff in the building. Leaders contribute to the team for the benefit of the team rather than the advancement of the individual. I have seized such opportunities to provide instruction to my colleagues and peers on topics related to both teacher leadership and educational technology, my chosen certificate of study program which has advanced to a masters program. In November of 2019, I, alongside my former co-teacher, led a district-wide professional development session on the district program utilized for reading diagnostic testing and instruction. I provided my colleagues with shortcuts, tips for success, frequently asked questions, models, sample activities, and reference materials to ensure their success after the session was over and the learning in their classrooms continued. Concurrently, during that same month, I participated in a district-wide Technology Night to provide instructional technology support to teachers, students, and families in our community. As I have progressed through my C.O.G.S. program, I have begun sharing resources with colleagues on how to best incorporate

digital citizenship into the classroom setting. Utilizing resources from my courses, I established documents for my peers and provided outlets for them to investigate to assist in modifying the use of technology within their classrooms. Essentially, I work to share my knowledge with my peers to advance their professional learning and inspire them to do the same in our building and in our district.

4. Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning.

Technology has played a pivotal role in education during the 21st century. Providing opportunities for students to expand their knowledge beyond the textbook and expand their reach beyond the world they see in front of them has strengthened educational practices in all subject areas. In previous years, reliance had been placed on the internet solely for information as if it solely served as a quicker way to access information than traveling to the local library. In today's curriculum development, the internet is no longer looked at as the expert source but rather a collection of creators sharing information, and our students contribute to that collection. This change is a shift into "participatory culture, meaning learning takes on a more active role than a traditional passive role" (Jacobs 2010). Students' relationships with the internet establish that they are contributors as much as they are viewers. To meet such a challenge and change, the development and implementation of the digital literacy curriculum as well as the ISTE technology standards provides a framework for teaching how to use technology appropriately and safely both in the classroom as well as outside of the school setting (Sickler_MA3_METL50512). My use of these standards within my ELA classroom help me to provide a comprehensive experience for my students while reinforcing my reading and writing standards through an engaging learning activity.

The key to promoting best practices for appropriate technologies to enhance learning experiences is to model, and I have worked over the past three years to do just that for all teachers in my building. Prior to the start of the pandemic, I used my leadership platform to present at our district's annual HTSD Tech Night. At this event, I modeled how to use Quizlet to incorporate gamification into any classroom while providing an interactive review tool for any content. I provided my colleagues with step-by-step instructions, modeled the program, and assisted in drawing connections between the program and their individual classes in both English and Spanish. While simply an ELA teacher without a technology liaison title, I have always practiced an "open door" policy and have encouraged peers to come in and see what engaging digital activities are taking place during my class. Whether we are playing a game of Blooket or utilizing Google Maps to complete a Webquest on Charles Dickens's London, I aim to share my experiences - both my successes and my failures - with my peers so that we can continue to move forward as technology becomes an even more integral part of our daily teaching.

5. Works with colleagues to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning.

In collaborating with a group of fellow middle school teachers to create an Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric, we outlined the essential components for a flourishing PLC. These characteristics are critical for teacher leaders to model and enforce when working with peers to ensure positive collaboration, focused decision-making, intentional implementation of programs or initiatives, accurate collection of data, and meaningful reflections. The plan established highlighted the value of all PLC members sharing a voice and working through the plan together as a team. In order for PLCs and CLCs to be successful and productive, members must have mutual trust and respect for one another and the learning process

(Group 3_MA1_METL50511). Once the collegiality has been established, a focus must be placed on the collaborative collection, analysis, dissemination, and reflection of data to reach the established goals. This occurs when “members begin to monitor their progress by asking questions about the meaning of planned activities and their results” (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 67). The plan recognizes that group members must be open and able to discuss and admit when changes need to take place. Our plan focuses on the need for concrete evidence that the plan is successful; otherwise, the group will need to reevaluate the plan and determine which steps need to be repeated in order for the group to reach their goal. In support of this push for collaboration over data, Carpenter and Munshower urged the importance of reflective dialogue and “those conversations that encourage teachers to discuss their teaching practices and collaborate on how these practices can be improved. Professional reflection leads to extensive and continuing conversation among teachers about curriculum, instruction and student development” (2020, p.78) (Group 3_MA1_METL50511).

6. *Advocates for sufficient preparation, time, and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning.*

Throughout the development of the steps to create an ideal PLC, an overarching theme was the need for teachers to have adequate time to go through the motions to establish a functioning PLC, to create goals, to develop and initiate action plans, to review data, and to reflect on the collaborative work of the team (Sickler_MA2_METL50511). Teacher leaders are the advocates for teachers to ensure that PLCs in particular have the opportunity to go through these motions so that they can achieve their goals and have a certain level of positive impact on their students as well as the overall school climate. Muñoz and Branham define this as an

essential aspect of collaborative culture. Their research included surveys administered to the teachers in Jefferson County, Kentucky and addressed some of the following areas:

- We are provided time during the contractual day and school year to meet as a team
- We use team time to engage in collective inquiry on questions specifically linked to gains in student achievement (2016).

In the section related to Collaboration, the results clearly indicated that “collaboration is hard due to time constraints” (2016). Time and scheduling are two of the very few aspects of education that can be controlled, and it is clear, through research from Muñoz, Branham, and others, that teachers feel they cannot successfully fulfill their obligations as PLC members without allocated time to work together. Teacher leaders have the agency and ability to take this data - both statistical and anecdotal - to administration to advocate for the need of common planning time, PLC time, and time for cross-curricular collaboration to ensure that academic and PLC goals are met and contribute to school success.

7. *Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning;*

Often in education, teachers revert to a “closed door policy” as a way of self preservation from comparison, judgment, and negativity. Teacher leaders have the responsibility of breaking this antiquated mindset and modeling how much can be learned from each other. A practice that allowed me to do so was my participation in Instructional Rounds. During these development activities, teachers lead teachers to assist in providing focused feedback, based on self-identified needs, and relevant suggestions for improvement. Throughout these Instructional Rounds, I had participated as both a sharer and an observer. While sharing my classroom, I had asked those observing to pay close attention to my use of questioning, as this is an area I am always looking

to improve upon. *How many higher order questions were asked? Was there a progression from basic recall to synthesis questions? Were there missed opportunities, and how can they be corrected in the future?* The three teachers circulated around my classroom while I worked with my students. At the completion of the day's activities, I received an email with anonymous feedback from the observing teachers identifying strengths and areas for improvement based on what I had asked to be observed. They had provided me with meaningful feedback and suggestions that I was able to put into practice the very next day. When the roles had reversed and I was an observer, I paid close attention to the teacher's requests and identified areas of practice to be able to provide just as much support as other teachers had done for me.

The Instructional Rounds program provided a risk-free environment for teachers to support teachers and for teachers to receive feedback on instruction outside of the traditional observation format. These are the programs that teacher leaders should facilitate to provide colleagues with the same opportunity: to open their doors, welcome in friends, receive support, and learn something new without fear of judgment. We as teachers become better through our work with each other, and establishing programs such as these assist in fostering trust amongst colleagues and creating an environment of constructive feedback with the ultimate goal of improving student learning.

8. *Uses information about emerging education, economic, and social trends in planning and facilitating professional learning*

A teacher leader understands that the student population changes from year to year and modifies instruction as well as building goals to meet the needs of the current learners. This is representative of culturally responsive teaching. The establishment of a new curriculum for seventh graders in my district provided me the opportunity to address the dire need for

representation within the texts utilized throughout the year (Sickler_MA2_METL50512). My district, located in Mercer County, is a mosaic of diversity, and to provide the “quality education for every student” it boasts in its philosophy, the literature taught should reflect the experiences of its students. Students should be afforded the opportunity to see themselves within the characters of the texts they read, and much of the antiquated curriculum utilized today merely represents the students on a surface level, predominantly through generalized skin color. For instance, in Module 1 of the HTSD curriculum guide for grade 7, four of the proposed texts for the storytelling unit incorporate Hispanic characters. Of these characters, only one story demonstrates a direct representation to a specific background, rather than falling under the “Hispanic” umbrella and neglecting to acknowledge cultural diversity of Hispanic and Latino nations. Only one story in the proposed guide represents students in unstable home situations. Only one text - a set of haiku poems- represents the Asian population, while all texts representing the African American community speak of token figures in the African American community rather than the African American experience. I used my knowledge and access to the demographics of the building as well as the socioeconomic status of the surrounding area to establish six seven week long units, driven by essential questions, to incorporate necessary diversity into the literature taught (Sickler_MA1_METL50512).

While this curriculum became a framework for my class, it also served as a template for utilizing student and community data to provide culturally responsive instruction. Upon its completion, this unit was shared with my house administrator, my English supervisor, and my grade partners to begin questioning how we, as a unified team, can establish a plan for all teachers to make one small change that directly correlates to one of the four characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. At that time, the suggestions had been shared with the director of

secondary education and the curriculum coordinator for the district. One small change can impact a large number of people, and it is my hope that my curriculum and its attention to my culturally diverse students influences the next selections for our textbooks and district provided programs.

5. Portfolio Assignment 4 Reflection: Domain IV

Indicators: The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice based on student results. The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure instructional practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission, and goals.

- 1. Facilitates the collection, analysis, and use of classroom- and school-based data to identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization, and school culture.*

In this domain, teacher leaders transition from professional learning and data analysis to application of teaching methods through modeling best practices. One of these practices is reflection. After utilizing this for my own benefit, I model reflecting for my students and colleagues, illustrating that to move forward, we need to know where we've been, what has worked, what has not worked, and what most needs to be changed. The key is to engage in dialogue with colleagues, opening classroom doors and welcoming feedback from colleagues with the intention to improve (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

The curriculum revision I have developed for the seventh grade curriculum in my district afforded me the opportunity to truly analyze what existed and evaluate how to meet the needs of our current students. In the established curriculum, there was a distinct lack of diversity, fostering of a global perspective, and a focus on the whole child. After reflecting upon data, anecdotal accounts, and classroom observations, it was clear that reconstructivist and humanistic perspectives were desperately needed to address the needs - academic, social, and psychological - of our students today. For the students of Hamilton Township to be in the best place to learn,

the diversity of the community should be highlighted and celebrated. Humanism embraces that emotional fulfillment outweighs achievement, and students are considered when making alterations to curricula so as to make learning a more satisfying experience. “When we learn to deal with learners’ psychological requirements,” Ornstein elaborates, “and when we become sensitive to what makes them want to learn, we can then focus on what they must learn. Affective needs are more important than cognitive needs” (2017). This psychology is connected with culture: students feeling heard, cared for, and important. The revisions to the curriculum I have developed aim to do just that (Sickler_MA2_METL50512).

2. *Engages in reflective dialog with colleagues based on observation of instruction, student work, and assessment data and helps make connections to research-based effective practices.*

As I had expressed recently to my district’s Curriculum Coordinator, it is imperative to view all teachers as teammates because we all contribute to the learning of all students. Deficiencies are not the result or responsibility of just one teacher. For example, in the ELA department, our standards are vertically designed to build upon one another, so we all contribute to the successes of our students, just as we all face the challenges of skill deficiencies and troublesome standards. As a result of this shared mindset, our PLCs have become focused on students, driven by growth, and fueled by educators that are passionate about the work at hand. DuFour and Eaker describe them best in that PLCs have a “shared mission, vision, and values” (Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2020, p. 7). The department and I utilize these opportunities to bring forth our classroom data, observations, successes, and struggles to utilize each other as resources, find commonalities amongst our classes, and develop action plans to advance all of our seventh grade students (Sickler_MA3_METL50511).

Additionally, for the past five years, I have served on my school's data team, consisting of an ELA teacher, a math teacher, and an administrator, and this has provided me with extensive opportunities to reflect on data and engage with my peers to make meaningful change. In close collaboration with our technology and testing staff in the district, I have spent many hours working on school platforms pulling, organizing, and analyzing school-wide data for state assessments, district benchmark platforms, and department benchmark assessments, as well as non-academic data sources such as attendance and free and reduced lunch status. Once the team and I had collected our findings, it was our responsibility to make meaningful connections between the data and our staff. *How could this information help everyone? What can they do with this information? How does this impact student learning in x, y, and z classes?* The next step of our process was to turnkey our findings. We would present our material to our staff members and all stakeholders under the premise that we were working to reach a universal goal. In many instances, our goal was to help remove our school from being identified as a "school in need of improvement" under ESSA. This is when the dialogue began. Teachers were able to attend Edcamp-style meetings focused on their specific questions as well as data tutorials and professional development sessions. Our colleagues would frequently stop by our classrooms with questions or ask if we could review data with them to ensure they are taking away the right conclusions to inform their instruction. As I continue into the second half of my fifth year at my school, I can see that the focus on data driven instruction, collaboration, and the "all for one" mentality has greatly impacted and improved the emphasis on student learning and has increased overall student achievement (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

3. *Supports colleagues' individual and collective reflection and professional growth by serving in roles such as mentor, coach, and content facilitator.*

Teacher leaders embody the principles of self reflection in an effort to not only grow individually but to promote collective, professional growth as well. A key to achieve such an end is to break down the figurative barriers around each classroom. Deprivatizing classrooms allows all teachers to view and utilize each other as assets; doing so levels the proverbial playing field, removes stigmas, increases vulnerability, and establishes that we as a team are here to help each other grow and become better. Tiong Ngee Derk (2019) identified that keeping classroom doors closed while PLCs of any kind are “open” is one of the biggest caveats to functioning PLCs and ultimately distances members from the goal of collaborating for success. As stated above, all teachers enter PLCs - whether grade level, departmental, or otherwise established - with their varied experiences in tow. This practical knowledge of pedagogical skills for student achievement is invaluable when working in a collaborative setting. However, all too often teachers close their doors for fear of judgment or competition and choose to withhold these skills from benefitting the whole group (Sickler_MA3_METL50511).

To combat this closed door mindset and foster collaboration and growth for my colleagues, I have changed my personal practices to present myself as a more adaptive and receptive teacher. I encourage any who pass by B4 to stop in, listen, engage, provide feedback, and, if applicable, leave a suggestion. All staff members are team members of value, and constructive feedback from one outside of the learning experience can be invaluable in my personal growth as well as provide me ways to turnkey the experience to help others. When teachers are apt to share what they know, given the buy-in to this PLC norm of opening one's doors and the commitment to the goal being worked toward, teachers then become vessels of knowledge to assist one another rather than competitors in a no-win situation. I was fortunate enough to experience such willingness while working in my PLC when creating our Educational

Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric, and this modeled for me the importance of being willing to let the proverbial walls down and share all that we have with one another in the hopes of reaching success together at whatever goal is set (Sickler_MA3_METL50511).

4. *Serves as a team leader to harness the skills, expertise, and knowledge of colleagues to address curricular expectations and student learning needs.*

I have always been a proponent of the notion that all students are able to learn and be successful both academically and socially with the proper support. As stated in my teaching mission statement, I believe in teaching to the whole child and that every aspect of his or her character contributes to his or her learning in my class and in life. I believe that all instructional decisions are right if for the benefit of the students. The students come first, and their learning is most important (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50514).

Driven by my personal belief that “it’s right if it’s for the kids,” I have allowed my current students to drive all instructional decisions for my classroom, as well as any programs to which I participate or facilitate. This mission has served as the foundation for programs of my creation, such as the GMS Gladiator Conquest, Gladiator Challenge I, Gladiator Challenge II, Virtual Homework Help Program, the Fifth Grade Summer Intervention Program, the Course Recovery Program, and the Summer Extension Program. Based on this mission, my teachers and I have collaborated with the Child Study Team, the guidance office, and administrators to collect pertinent personal and academic data to inform all academic instruction. As a result, we have provided comprehensive instruction and intervention, driven by standards based data, to support the needs of our GMS students. That, to me, reflects my teaching mission statement as well as my platform as a leader: “It’s right if it’s for the kids.” When the students and their academic and

personal growth are the foundation of the decisions being made, in my eyes, it will always be right.

5. *Uses knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe.*

This domain introduces the application of technology, both existing and emerging, to assist colleagues in helping students navigate how to find information, apply information, collaborate with others effectively and appropriately, and how to use technology to enhance their learning (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513). In previous years, reliance had been placed on the internet solely for information as if it solely served as a quicker way to access information than traveling to the local library. In today's curriculum development, the internet is no longer looked at as the expert source but rather a collection of creators sharing information, and our students contribute to that collection. This change is a shift into "participatory culture, meaning learning takes on a more active role than a traditional passive role" (Jacobs 2010). Students' relationships with the internet establish that they are contributors as much as they are viewers (Sickler_MA2_METL50512).

To meet this demand in my own classroom, I have utilized my knowledge gained from my C.O.G.S. and M.Ed. in Educational Technology courses to incorporate various teaching platforms and gamification strategies to provide differentiated instruction for my students. I have transformed my content reviews from paper and pencil to interactive with the incorporation of platforms such as Kahoot, Quizlet, Quizizz, and Blooket. Rather than limiting my students to drawing for a class assignment, I've provided outlets to create comics with Pixton, interactive

images with ThingLink, word cloud brainstorming maps with Wordle, and interactive presentations with Google Slides. My ultimate goal as the leader of my classroom is to provide my students with multiple means to demonstrate their understanding. Achieving such an end has also been impacted by my application of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards into my daily classroom practices. In doing so, I have laid the foundation for my students to become empowered learners while utilizing technology, practice positive digital citizenship, utilize digital tools to construct knowledge and creative artifacts, apply a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating imaginative solutions, apply technological devices to develop and employ strategies for understanding and solving problems, digitally communicate both meaningfully and purposefully, and broaden perspectives by collaborating with others and working effectively in teams locally and globally (“ISTE standards” n.d.).

Learning extends well beyond the walls of my classroom, and I seize any opportunity to grow professionally through any platform. My utilization of Twitter, my platform of choice to market myself as an educator and teacher leader, has afforded me the opportunity to connect with educators in my district and state, as well as across the country, to share best practices, support one another, and foster a community. As a result, I was fortunate enough to get to know a principal of an elementary school in my district, learn of his book and professional learning community of authors - The Four O’Clock Faculty, attend a personal and professional development session, and collaborate with another inspiring principal from an adjacent town who, in turn, shared his expertise with my organization, Delta Kappa Gamma. Twitter and the use of this technology opened the door and allowed me to foster these beneficial professional relationships to grow personally and as an educator.

6. *Promotes instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.*

Continuous personal and professional development have armed me with knowledge and strategies to address diversity and equity in my building. My personal development with the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) has aided me in addressing the needs of my English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as utilizing new modification and accommodation methods to support my special education students and those with 504 plans. The extent of this knowledge has reached beyond my classroom and has impacted every program I have led, every class of which I have participated, and every teacher with whom I have collaborated. Similarly, my training in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) has prepared me with strategies to best support students whose upbringings have established setbacks in their personal and educational growth. This information has filled my toolbox with warning signs, coping strategies, and mindfulness activities to provide what my students need. Disseminating this information amongst my colleagues has allowed them to start establishing the foundation I have built regarding ACE students and has assisted them in connecting with students whom they may have clashed with previously. Supporting my colleagues by sharing a new outlook, a new method, or a new approach increases the overall acceptance of students labeled as “different,” “challenging,” or “unteachable.” Development and teamwork, time and again, have proven that any and all challenges - may they be cultural, behavioral, academic, social, or psychological - can not only be faced but can also lead to even stronger connections and even more meaningful learning experiences.

6. Portfolio Assignment 5 Reflection: Domain V

Indicators: The teacher leader is knowledgeable about current research on classroom- and school based data and the design and selection of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and collaborates with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies.

- 1. Increases the capacity of colleagues to identify and use multiple assessment tools aligned to state and local standards.*

This domain coincides with Domain II in focusing on data driven instruction for improvement. As the teacher leader continues to build knowledge on how to collect and apply data, there is an increase in focus on how to use multiple means of assessment to inform decisions. Teacher leaders collaborating in creating, implementing, and scoring assessments, such as grade level common assessments, to determine the strategies that are working best and ways to lessen any identifiable deficiencies. In taking on the challenges of seeing these assessments through from design to data analysis with colleagues, teacher leaders are creating a culture of trust amongst colleagues as well as objective reflection; as teachers share their findings, compare data, and work together to find solutions, the collegiality and trust increases with the realization that “we are all in this together” (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

The most impactful way teacher leaders can influence colleagues’ use of multiple measures is to support their understanding of diverse learners. Whether focusing on Gardner’s multiple intelligences, Bandura’s social cognitive theory, Skinner’s operant conditioning, or Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, each theory has home in education, and no theory is an island. At the beginning of each school year, my principal encourages teachers to engage with students,

learn about them, and build rapport. To do so, he always disseminates a multiple intelligence survey, as well as a V.A.R.K. learner survey, to present to the students to “figure out how they like to learn.” While this may give a snapshot into the student perspective, recent research and application has proven that there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to learning. To elaborate, students are not exclusively one type of learner but rather possess a gradient learning style. Students adjust their learning styles to the given situation. Additionally, students apply different aspects of different theories of learning to develop their own outlook and perspective toward learning (Sickler_MajorAssignment1_LDTC18510). For instance, conditional knowledge is present in any classroom which presents new information to students. When processing that new information, students need to decipher if the information is declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, or conditional knowledge all before finding ways to associate the new information to previously learned information to lock into memory (Sickler_Assignment5_LDTC18510). This is just one snapshot of the processes students engage in during just one instance of learning in their six-hour day. Teachers need to be cognizant of the types of learners, the processes of learning, and the multiple theories of learning that students engage with daily to best support their diverse learners through learning activities. My role as a teacher leader provides me the platform to share this knowledge and my own experiences, such as the aforementioned beginning of the year surveys, to demonstrate how different learning styles surface in the classroom and how specific learning activities can connect with and support students who thrive utilizing specific learning styles.

2. *Collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring, and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice and student learning.*

Working in my grade and department-level PLC consistently validates the importance of collaborating over common assessments, data interpretation, and instructional design. Over the past three years, the PLC and I have collaborated over both district-assigned biannual benchmarks and teacher-assigned common assessments. Muñoz and Branham identified that “individuals, teams and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement” (2016), and our time spent in our PLC was devoted to improve our students’ writing skills, specifically focusing on the R.A.C.E. writing format. As a team, we evaluated our students’ writing and determined there was a common deficiency regarding citing and explaining textual evidence for literary analysis. Therefore, we devised an assessment plan as well as teaching strategies to improve student efficacy with these standards and skills. As a team, we were able to aid our students, not just one teacher’s or another’s, in growing 29% overall from their pre-assessment to their post-assessment. These benchmarks and opportunities to gather with my peers to practice methods such as “building high performing, collaborative teams focused on improved student learning, monitoring student learning on a timely basis, and creating systems of interventions to provide students with additional time and support for learning” (Sickler_MA2_METL50511) not only made us better team members; the process continues to make us better teachers.

While my time and efforts in my ELA PLC highlight the benefits of collaborating over data, the best representation of my interpretation of data is reflected in my inquiry project designed to evaluate parent involvement and engagement with the school community. A teacher leader both acknowledges and understands that every inquiry into data does not always yield a new solution to a problem, and my inquiry project demonstrated the importance of evaluating data for information and not just solutions. Calfee and Masuka’s research into classroom

assessment as inquiry concluded, “Interpretation builds on two criteria: consistency of the evidence and strength of the argument” (1997, p.91). When researchers leave data up to interpretation, it can be easily manipulated to prove one’s argument incorrect or can mislead to an incorrect conclusion. Calfee and Masuka also address the issue of reliability and validity. For data to be considered in a research study such as this, the sources should be deemed reputable, the data supported and addressing the question of primary concern, and the evidence from the source dependable (Sickler_Assignment1p2_METL50514).

3. *Creates a climate of trust and critical reflection in order to engage colleagues in challenging conversations about student learning data that lead to solutions to identify issues.*

As a teacher leader, I have shared my constructivist approach to education with my peers in the hopes of inspiring others to break from the antiquated, address the needs of the current students, think outside of the box, and create genuine, enriching learning experiences that will impact our students forever. With the enactment of ESSA in 2016, my building has made strides to become more focused on the “how” of learning rather than the “what” and to break from “what has always worked in the past.” We believed, as I do to this day, that skill mastery is far more valuable than content mastery in the sense of being able to approach any challenge and understand how to face it. Today, a greater emphasis is placed on the learning experience and less on how many stories have been read or how many pages of homework had been assigned (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50514). This mindset shift did not occur overnight. Countless PLC’s, at times difficult conversations with peers, data workshops, brainstorming sessions, and both formal and informal conversations with administration combined with teacher motivation laid the foundation for a school climate that focuses on what matters most: our students. In doing

so, a level of trust has been established, delving from the notion that we are all facing the same challenges and working toward the same goal. No teacher was exempt from the hard work needed, and no teacher carried the burden alone.

My approach to reflection for change has always spanned from placing myself in the students' shoes. *What are they expected to do? Am I able to do this on my own? What support do I need to be successful, and how can this inform my instruction for my students?* My approach to writing is the most telling of this mindset. I've always viewed writing instruction to be similar to that of mathematics: structured, systematic, and procedural at best. I teach our school-wide constructed response format in the process of associative shifting, expressing to students that the response continues to grow as the stimulus changes. In the instance of writing, as I add a new sentence or paragraph to my essay, my response continues to grow in length and validity. The process continues with slight changes to the equation, and that is what establishes the continuity of the writing format. In addition to this systematic approach to the writing process, my class is rooted in observation, trial, and error, which can be a difficult task in front of twenty-five teenagers. There is nothing assigned that I do not demonstrate, and there is nothing graded that has not been modeled. I afford the students the opportunity to see me write, and while it is very perennialist of me to consider myself the master, I aim to provide my students a visual representation of the writing process for both assistance and comfort. They observe me apply transitions to each of my paragraphs while struggling to find the right phrase to link my ideas. When something doesn't go as planned, students bear witness to the regrouping and redirection, illustrating that sometimes a new pathway is needed to reach one's goals for their writing (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50514). This approach to writing paragraphs in my classroom transcends B4 and engages in every conversation in every PLC or committee meeting. I feel that,

as a teacher leader, I am able to face the difficult and challenging because I have theoretically done so with my students.

4. *Works with colleagues to use assessment and data findings to promote changes in instructional practices or organizational structures to improve student learning.*

Once the assessments have been given, the plan executed, and the data collected, teacher leaders work to make meaningful connections to ultimately lead to lasting positive change. When reflecting upon the results of my inquiry project, one may view the disjointed research collected a failure, but I would disagree. While my access to concrete statistics and student data was limited, I was afforded the opportunity to view my research from a different angle. *How was my school working toward increasing parent engagement? What steps have been taken thus far to establish relationships, and how are those relationships being fostered? What actions are being taken to solidify a connection with the most needy of areas in the community?*

(Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). As my final presentation for my peers demonstrated, by not meeting my initial expectations, my project afforded me the opportunity to a) acknowledge and celebrate the growth made from 2019 to 2021, and b) establish my next steps for moving forward toward my goal. These steps included finding the root and addressing that there may be many problems causing low engagement, collaborating through shared plans and building procedures amongst buildings for continuity, reinforcing successes while evaluating failures, and reflecting on the data, making changes as necessary, to continue moving forward and strengthening community engagement (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50514). Change is brought forth not by restarting after a failure; it is derived from the willingness to analyze what went wrong to find a new course of action. Teacher leaders believe, as the old adage goes, “when one door closes, another opens.” Failure is not a setback; it is an imperative function of the inquiry

process that will help all teachers to promote change. These changes, whether engagement focused like my inquiry project or otherwise geared, if centered around the current students, will inevitably support student learning.

7. Portfolio Assignment 6 Reflection: Domain VI

Indicators: The teacher leader understands that families, cultures, and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.

- 1. Uses knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in the school community to promote effective interactions among colleagues, families, and the larger community.*

Domain VI focuses on connections made between teachers, schools, and the outside communities. Teacher leaders understand that collaboration is key in education, and they continually find ways to build relationships with families, communities, and local businesses and community leaders to provide the best educational opportunities possible. Teacher leaders learn and apply their knowledge of the diversity of the school to promote positive interactions within the school as well as out in the community. To do so, we model how to communicate with families and stakeholders. This may be through phone calls, virtual meetings, or through applications with assistive technology to translate material into many languages. Teacher leaders understand that collaboration with families and community extends far beyond simply translating school material into three different languages. We understand the needs of the families and community and work with colleagues to address what the students need in order to do the best they can. These can range from personal and familial to educational. Teacher leaders consider the whole student and what can be done to provide the best instruction possible (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

Knowing one's students culturally adds to establishing a classroom community, and the same can be held true for establishing a school community. My inquiry project focused on parental involvement and engagement from low income families provided me a reason to delve into the breakdown and demographics of my school and surrounding community. As of April of 2021, my school consisted of approximately 38% of students identifying as Hispanic, 35% identifying as white, 18% identifying as African American, 5% identifying as multicultural, 3.5% identifying as Asian, and the remaining percentage representing other cultures or representing a student not identifying with one particular background. The school contains 478 male students and 456 female students ("Monroe" 2021). The majority of students that represented what subjectively could be identified as "low income" primarily attended one of the six "feeder" elementary schools, narrowing the target area to select neighborhoods in our 40-sq.mile town. As of March 7, 2021, approximately 63% of the student body of my school identified as a student of color, and of that population, 70% were enrolled in our free-and-reduced lunch program ("Monroe" 2021) (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). In addition to supporting my project goals, this information provided me with a new perspective on my student population. For example, understanding that the majority of my student population identifies as Hispanic has greatly impacted how I disseminate information in class, how I communicate with those at home, the stories I select, and the manner in which I teach vocabulary. This information, along with other data collected for my inquiry project, has afforded me opportunities to turnkey this culturally based information to my peers to foster stronger relationships with students and with the outside community.

2. *Models and teaches effective communication and collaboration skills with families and other stakeholders focused on attaining equitable achievement for students of all backgrounds and circumstances.*

Eberly, Joshi, and Konzal's research illuminated that children are educated "in the home and the community as well as in the school; therefore, open and trusting communication between teachers and parents is critical" (2007). Regardless of primary language, teachers must foster relationships and maintain open lines of communication with parents, guardians, and families to ensure that all stakeholders are in agreement and are supporting a student's academic efforts. Teachers must be cautious, however, to avoid any miscommunications based on cultural differences. Statements with the best of intentions can be misconstrued if taken out of context or presented incorrectly in a different language. "When families and educators can communicate openly," Eberly et al. continued, "there is a better chance that this will lead to increased social capital, which then leads to common understandings and expectations about the best ways to help children learn" (2007). As a teacher leader, I understand the responsibilities of establishing and fostering effective communication with all parents, not just those that speak English. To achieve this end, I utilize the program Talking Points. This application allows teachers and administrators to contact parents with limited English proficiency in a manner that allows for effortless translation into the parents' primary language. Language, therefore, no longer serves as a barrier to communication with parents and families. In addition to Talking Points, I utilize Google Translate to ensure that all families have access to the material I intend on disseminating through email. As Eberly et al. concluded, "Open, honest, and reciprocal cultural exchanges can take place when educators assume their professional responsibility to reach out to parents in thoughtful and respectful ways" (2007). The act of incorporating these programs and measures

into daily classroom communications demonstrates to the families of my students that, while a cultural divide may exist, it shall not hinder establishing a connection to best support the student's success.

3. *Facilitates colleagues' self-examination of their own understandings of community culture and diversity and how they can develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students.*

As with all challenges, the mindset of the teacher leader is to approach each challenge as a new opportunity, and I have done just that to combat the cultural divide that can often occur with the families of students in my building. Individually, my personal development with the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) has aided me in addressing the needs of my English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as all students whose primary language is something other than English. Upon completion, I turn-keyed vital strategies to colleagues informally as a way to support them in their struggles to find the best form of communication for their classroom communities. In doing so, I was able to reflect on my own classroom experiences and practices. *How have I established a welcoming environment for all? How do I honor all cultures, not just that of the majority, all year rather than just during the holidays? How have I used culture as a resource for student growth?* Concurrently, school-based EdCamp sessions have afforded me the opportunity to collaborate with my peers, share my own experiences with addressing and honoring cultural differences while finding the best means of communication, and seek best practices to strengthen my own linguistic toolbox. The transfer of ideas, resources, and experiences is what establishes a teacher leader as a proponent of culturally responsive practices and a vital resource in the school. As a whole, our staff has identified that cultural awareness

contributes greatly to the perception of our school climate. Inclusivity includes ethnicity, heritage, language, customs, and culture. Quarterly training regarding culturally responsive teaching has aided teachers in honoring the differences of our learners, culturally and otherwise, while working to provide the best instruction to foster academic growth of all students. We acknowledge that this meaningful work is not just the responsibility of the ESL teacher or Spanish teacher; we all are responsible for establishing a welcoming climate that honors all forms of diversity and utilizes it as a means to strengthen classroom and building interactions.

4. Develops a shared understanding among colleagues of the diverse educational needs of families and the community.

Schunk established a connection between cultural differences and academic learning and achievement in stating, “The attitudes, beliefs, and practices of cultures must be examined to determine causes of differences. There often are wide differences within cultures, so generalizations about cross-cultural differences may be misleading” (2019). It is imperative for teachers and teacher leaders alike to look beyond the stereotypes of classifications to see the students, the families, and the communities of which we are a part. Having attended the school of which I teach many years ago, I can confidently say that the diversity of our building as well as the town as a whole has drastically changed since my years as a student. Many often view this as a negative, a proverbial decline due to diversity. This could not be further from the truth.

When analyzing our building on paper, as previously noted from an interview with my vice principal, the statistics illustrate that groups that were once identified as minorities represent a much larger percentage of the student population. Looking beyond identified heritage, statistical analysis of student data concludes that over 70% of the student population in 2021 received free and/or reduced lunch, suggesting a socioeconomic need for resources. Identifying

the “feeder school” of which a student attended can illustrate the geographical area of which the student resides; this then fosters conversations regarding community access to resources in the different areas of my 40-sq. mile town. Diverse learners are not limited to just linguistics, heritage, or cultures. I, as a teacher leader, continue to foster discussions with colleagues regarding what “diverse” actually looks like in our building and that it is no longer limited to heritage or language.

To positively promote diversity amongst our learners, particularly those in English-Language Arts classes, there has been a significant push for changes to the overall district curriculum to represent our current learners. Literature provides access, and access fosters new understandings. As a result of our collective efforts, we have successfully added in both literature and nonfiction texts that are representative of students of varied backgrounds; physical, cognitive, and emotional impairments; varied socioeconomic backgrounds; and varied languages. For instance, most recently, my seventh graders read a fictional story of a young North American Indian who overcomes the loss of his father through playing baseball. This text is paired with an informational article regarding the history of athletics and the notion that, under a decree from the United Nations, it is everyone’s birthright to engage in sports regardless of background. To round out the unit, students encounter “Amigo Brothers” by Piri Thomas, a fictional tale of two Hispanic young men from a rough neighborhood that use boxing as their means to cope and to prevent being a stereotype. These texts are three of many that now exist for our students as a result of our advocacy and understanding of the importance of acknowledging our school diversity and diverse learners.

5. *Collaborates with families, communities, and colleagues to develop comprehensive strategies to address the diverse educational needs of families and the community.*

The most direct approach to establishing strategies to address the needs of our community is to simply communicate with our community. As previously mentioned, generalizations can mislead administrators, teacher leaders, and advocates for change into thinking x, y, and z are needed. However, as we have learned time and again with our learners in the classroom, one size does not fit all, and it cannot be assumed that the needs of one represent the needs of many. Therefore, increased and varied communication and engagement with families and members of our community aids in identifying specific needs so that the school community can provide the most comprehensive assistance possible.

During the pandemic, I worked with teachers, counselors, and administrators alike to utilize multiple means of communication to access families and make communications at varied times of day to accommodate schedules in the hopes of supporting our community however they needed it. Family connections continue to be fostered by way of the home visit program. Enacted during the 2017-2018 school year and adapted for the current setting, I collaborate with teachers and counselors to make and strengthen connections with students and families through phone calls, Google Meets, and physical visitations to ensure all needs are met and all concerns are heard. Beginning in March of 2020, food distribution has been established at seven locations throughout the district to provide a week's worth of food to families in need with no questions asked. Even while dancing between the remote and hybrid schedules, Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives continued to support our community, and a holiday assistance drive, in partnership with The College of New Jersey, provided families with clothing, toys, and necessary supplies for the holiday season (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514).

A great emphasis has been placed on giving whatever can be given to our community, and no event represents this more than the Virtual Community Resource Fair, an event which

took place on a Saturday morning in April of this year. In assisting with trilingual information being disseminated on social media and with a time provided outside of traditional work hours, my committee of teachers and staff assembled support programs and resources in the areas of legal aid, financial support, mental health, counseling, academic success, and technology, all containing bilingual presenters. A colleague of mine that participated in the event reflected back and stated, “It was easier not to host it, but we were able to address 100% of the issues of that Saturday fair” (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). As a result of that resource fair, interpreters were utilized to sign parents up for the PowerSchool parent portal, complete applications for food services, communicate with different departments, and aid parents in essentially receiving whatever aid they needed at the time. When we were able to listen to the needs of the community, we were able to cater our resources to those that were best suited. Doing so provided the support, through resources and encouragement, our community needed, and this engagement impacted each family present to continue to stay actively engaged with our school. At times, the best leadership takes the shape of reactive measures, and, as established by our recent activities in the community, listening to our “GMS family” and providing what they needed was the best reaction we could provide.

8. Portfolio Assignment 7 Reflection: Domain VII

Indicators: The teacher leader understands how educational policy is made at the local, state, and national level as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning, and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.

1. *Shares information with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning.*

Domain VII reflects upon a teacher leader's knowledge and agency to advocate for students when developing local, state, and national educational policies. Teacher leaders are driven by the knowledge of student needs and with the goal of increasing student learning. To achieve such an end, teacher leaders communicate with peers how local, state, and national policies can affect each teacher's classrooms and how they impact practices at the school level. Teacher leaders continually advocate for access to resources, including but not limited to time and financial support, for colleagues to address the professional development and practices needed to focus on school improvement goals. Teacher leaders assume the platform for themselves, their students, their colleagues, and for all teachers (Sickler_Assignment2_METL50513).

Collaboration is an essential part of teacher and school growth. Teacher leaders embrace this ideal and, through collaboration, work with colleagues to share information that can impact classroom practices for all teachers. Killion's study on the benefits of collaboration illustrates the

benefits of teachers working together over the things that matter most. Killion examined over 300 schools and 9,000 teachers in a specific district over a two year span to determine the impact that collaboration amongst teachers can have. The conclusion was clear: collaboration makes teachers better. Killion concluded, “Teachers working in schools with better collaboration about students were better able to raise student math achievement. In reading, collaboration about instructional strategies and curriculum was a positive predictor of value added” (2015). Additionally, it was established through empirical data that teachers’ rate of improvement increases “more rapidly rapidly if they work in a school with higher-quality collaboration than they would if they worked in a school with lower-quality collaboration” (2015). It is clear that teacher collaboration has strong, positive effects on student achievement as well as school culture and climate. As a teacher leader, I consider it a responsibility to ensure that my colleagues feel that they can safely and comfortably share resources with one another to positively impact our students.

My role as one of the two GMS iReady Champions provided me ample opportunities early in my tenure at this school to foster collaboration between my colleagues in the ELA department. With my partner teacher, I had received multiple district-level training on the assessment and instruction platform as well as its corresponding resources. My partner and I knew that the best use of this information is to share it. We then created resources for our teachers and led presentations in our ELA PLC’s to support our colleagues. Additionally, in November of 2019, we presented our information as well as best practices at a district-wide professional development event. We used our certification and platform to bring teachers together to discuss changes in standards correlated to the programs we possess and how we, as teachers, can face these new challenges together.

2. *Works with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students.*

For three years, I had the opportunity to participate on my school's School Improvement Panel (ScIP). As a team of 15 individuals of various roles, backgrounds, and years of experiences, we reviewed schoolwide data to find trends, identify needs, and establish levels of growth. Whether the data related to teacher SGP scores, state testing data, or results from the most recent school climate survey, the ScIP panel would discuss the various ways to interpret the data at hand to improve the learning environment for all students. We discussed the various needs of our students, including but not limited to physiological needs, the need to feel loved and to belong, and the need for self actualization. In retrospect, had this team of leaders not evaluated the social and emotional needs of our students, as identified in the school climate survey, HIB reportings, and guidance referrals, our school would not have made strides to become a National School of Character for 2020-2025.

3. *Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students, to secure additional resources within the building or district that support student learning, and to communicate effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members.*

A teacher leader advocates for utilizing a variety of data points to address the needs of the students. This is illustrated during my daily instruction with my co-teacher in our inclusion setting, during my ELA PLC's, with my Diversity committee members, on the ScIP panel, and in every discussion with a colleague regarding how to help our students. When students are viewed as more than just scores from standardized assessments, the school community can begin to determine the root causes of the issues with their population, whether they be engagement,

achievement, or climate matters. This mindset has led to the creation of multiple annual events in my building, including but not limited to the College and Career Fair, the Fall Resource Fair, and the Spring Saturday Resource Fair. In conjunction with my administration, I assisted in organizing these events to bring the resources to the community at a time which is conducive to parent participation. Resources included therapy options, housing, insurance, NJ SNAP contacts, and transportation. By extending our reach into the community, we are demonstrating how dedicated we are to supplying our Gladiator families with what they need to survive and thrive while aiding our students in finding their ways to success.

4. *Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals.*

As a leader, I find it as essential to work to meet the various needs of our community members as it is our students. My inquiry project allowed me to focus on how my school has been doing so while evaluating the engagement that has resulted from these efforts. From 2019-2021, the school community placed heavy emphasis on parental engagement to address school-wide initiatives such as minimizing chronic absenteeism (“Belmont” 2021). These activities included hiring two spanish-speaking secretaries in the main office to be able to communicate with families, hiring 1.5 new ESL teachers (.5 representing a part time teacher gaining a full time position) to address our increasingly culturally diverse population of students, offering Sheltered Instruction experience to all teachers and staff, utilizing technology programs that can be translated into multiple languages, and providing a wellness survey to families by way of social media, the school website, and a Robo-call to the community. Barriers were beginning to fall that

stood between the school and families, and as access increased, communication ultimately followed (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). Beyond the pandemic restrictions, the school practices an open door policy to encourage parental involvement and engagement. As Ms. Belmont astutely identified, “During a normal, virus-free year, no one gets turned away. They can always access someone to speak to and have their concerns heard” (“Belmont” 2021). To modify this action during the pandemic, teachers, counselors, and administrators alike utilize multiple means of communication to access families and make communications at varied times of day to accommodate schedules. Concurrently, family connections are still being fostered by way of the home visit program. Enacted during the 2017-2018 school year and adapted for the current setting, teachers and counselors continue to make and strengthen connections with students and families through phone calls, Google Meets, and physical visitations to ensure all needs are met and all concerns are heard (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). When we as a school community focus on the needs of the communities of which our students live, we begin to bridge the gap between home and school and inevitably foster strong relationships between the two with the collective goal of student success.

5. Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.

As a teacher leader, I understand that my responsibility extends beyond the walls of my classroom. I believe in continuing to grow through professional development, work with colleagues, book studies, and graduate courses to find the best ways to advocate for my students. This will serve as a positive influence for my colleagues to also pursue and extend their education to positively impact their students. Through discussions with my colleagues recently, I learned how my decisions to participate in community events, pursue my graduate studies, and become a support system for all students have the potential to impact those around me. For

example, as a result of the completion of this degree and the progression of my second masters, my co-teacher has begun researching how to return to school and gain an advanced degree to support her LLD students. My actions as a leader, without marketing them as “leadership activities,” have the potential to positively impact my colleagues. This level of modeling establishes leaders as the trailblazers of the profession that help ignite the fire in colleagues and students alike.

9. Reflection on Impact Project (Inquiry Project)

1. Project summary

This inquiry project truly developed into a labor of love by its completion in the Agency in Teacher Leadership course. I selected a topic that was apparent in my own classroom: a gradual decline of parent engagement. As my interest in the topic grew, I came to realize that this was a schoolwide issue especially with regards to certain subsets of our student population. I was determined to quantify this idea of engagement between the school and local community to collect and assess data with the hopes of developing an action plan to combat the engagement issue.

In the Teacher Leadership in practice course, much of my time was spent collecting relevant data and connecting my work to both Domain VI of the Teacher Leader Model Standards and my teaching philosophy that “it takes a village to educate a student” (Sickler_Assignment3_METL50513). Unfortunately, the research conducted in METL50513 concluded that there isn’t a direct correlation between increased parental involvement and increased student achievement. Early in the inquiry process, I needed to distinguish the difference between engagement and involvement. I expanded on the ideals of El Nokali et al. and their view of the home and school contexts as “autonomous microsystems, and parent involvement is conceptualized as a mesosystem, which is made up of interactions between key microsystems.” Although each system would function to independently impact a student, together the home and school contexts build the necessary support for student success (2010) (Sickler_Assignment1p1_METL50514). As I defined parent involvement versus parent engagement, it was essential for me to establish what the parent interaction to look like in order to determine its connection with student achievement. I needed to specify what “my”

engagement looked like, whether it be attendance at school academic based functions, attendance at school non-academic based functions, or simply participation of any kind in the school PTO.

The collection and analysis of data for my school was rather eye opening. Demographic data illustrated the cultural diversity that has drastically increased over the past ten years. The majority of students that represented what subjectively could be identified as “low income” primarily attended one of the six “feeder” elementary schools, narrowing the target area to select neighborhoods in our 40-sq.mile town. To protect the anonymity of these students, I was limited in my ability to collect specific data regarding these schools and students to develop a concrete subgroup. As of March 7, 2021, approximately 63% of the student body of my school identified as a student of color, and of that population, 70% were enrolled in our free-and-reduced lunch program (“Monroe” 2021). This final data point, however, was determined to not yield a true collection of students as not all applications are verified under the NJDOE (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514).

My research required me to review all school events over the past three years to categorize them in terms of levels of engagement. To do so, I reviewed the school calendar to determine the number and types of events provided over the last three years. During the 2018-2019 school year, engagement activities were offered in the forms of seven academic school activities, eight non-academic school activities, and eight community-based activities. All activities took place during weeknights between the hours of 5:00 and 9:00PM (“Grice middle school” n.d.). From September of 2019 to March of 2020, four academic school activities were offered, nine non-academic school activities were offered, and seven community-based activities were offered (“Grice middle school” n.d.). These all occurred prior to the COVID-19 shutdown of public schools in the area for the remainder of the academic year and were offered on week

nights as well as Saturday mornings. As of April of 2021, two academic school activities, one non-academic school activity, and one community-based activity have been offered and promoted (“Grice middle school” n.d.) (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514).

One may view the disjointed research collected and compared in my inquiry project a failure, but I would disagree. While my access to concrete statistics and student data was limited, I was afforded the opportunity to view my research from a different angle. How was my school working toward increasing parent engagement? What steps have been taken thus far to establish relationships, and how are those relationships being fostered? What actions are being taken to solidify a connection with the most needy of areas in the community? This project provided me with new questions to answer and a starting point in working toward correcting this engagement issue with families from low-income areas (Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514).

2. The Rationale/Basis of Inquiry Project

In my hometown of Hamilton, NJ, the poverty rate in my hometown doubled from 2000 to 2020, and the economic struggles of families outside of the classroom have begun to impact student success within it. This acknowledgement led me to my problem of practice. My problem of practice centered around finding ways to increase involvement of the low-income families in my area and to gauge its impact on student achievement levels both daily as well as during standardized assessments. I believed in and wanted to conclude that there is a correlation between families taking time to engage with the school community and students’ long term success rates. As a teacher leader in my school, my research has helped and will continue to help provide me with concrete evidence, as well as data, to support the notion that addressing the involvement of this subgroup will increase student achievement. My focus on this topic has guided me to developing the following inquiry questions that steered my research:

- a. How does an increase of low-income parent and family engagement at school functions increase student achievement on standardized testing?
- b. How does student attendance compare between middle class and low-income families in regards to parental and familial involvement with the school?
- c. How can remote access to school increase parent and family engagement for low-income families? (Sickler_Assignment1p1_METL50514)

These questions, paired with my background knowledge into the changes in the community, inspired my desire to delve deeper into the issue of low engagement to find a route cause as well as begin to search for a solution. I knew that this topic had the potential to impact the engagement levels of parents of my current students as well as those in the surrounding area.

3. How This Project has Impacted My Teaching

My results from this inquiry project made it very clear that the work on fostering and maintaining strong familial engagement to promote academic achievement is far from over. This merely became a starting point for me for my own classroom population as well as the entire student body.

Since the completion of this project, I have consistently reflected on the fact that everything relating to a student is interconnected. As with students in a classroom, there are many factors that impact the engagement level of a parent or family, and to find a solution, we need to understand the root of the problem. This inquiry project has reminded me of the importance of viewing all sides and aspects of a situation before passing a judgment, accepting a generalization, or falling victim to a stereotype. For example, in the instance of the engagement referenced in my project, are there transportation or communication issues that prevent the parent from attending a school function? Does the family need mental health or SEL support in place to

welcome the new partnership with the school? Does the household have a unique structure that limits accessibility (ex: a grandparent raising grandchildren with limited understanding of technology, or a parent struggling to find child supervision)? Are our families transient and frequently traveling out of the country to be with relatives?

(Sickler_Assignment1p3_METL50514). I find it necessary to reiterate that with classrooms, with students, with families, and with communities, one size does not fit all.

This project reestablished my vision of education and the essentiality of “the village” in providing a student’s education. I aim to utilize any resource available to provide my students anything they may need to break the barriers that may stand in their way. I incorporate learning activities of which all students can relate, regardless of where they come from, to promote community and raise engagement within my classroom. Within my lessons, I have sought to address social and emotional learning within the context of the stories I teach, and I am proud to incorporate more multicultural protagonists into my unit plans. Engagement was a large undertaking for my inquiry project, and, as previously stated, although it may not have yielded “success” in the same way others have, the project opened many doors for me to further establish connections within my classroom as well as our building. That is a result I certainly consider a success.

10. Reflection on C.O.G.S. Program and Learning

1. Introduction

When considering my C.O.G.S., I wanted to select a program that would impact my classroom today as much as in the future. Given the digital requirements of COVID-teaching, the Educational Technology certificate program was the best fit. To say I enjoyed this program is an understatement. After one full semester, I had applied for and was accepted into the M.Ed. in Educational Technology program. The C.O.G.S. courses sparked a fire in me that will result in a second masters degree and a greater wealth of knowledge come July 2022.

Through this program, I gained a wealth of knowledge regarding selecting proper tools and resources for my classroom, how to implement technology for the various needs of my learners, and the best methods to approach the internet. Additionally, this program helped me gain invaluable resources for understanding the ISTE technology standards for teachers and students, develop my own understanding of digital citizenship, and connect with educators across the state. This certificate program helped me to develop as a modern educator to aid me in meeting the needs of my current students in this digital age. I am extremely fortunate to have learned from the professors I had encountered and to have worked through the challenges of these five courses. I truly feel that, as a result, I am a better educator for my students.

2. List of Courses

- a. EDTC33580: Introduction to Educational Technology
- b. EDTC33585: Internet in the Classroom
- c. EDTC33510: Emerging Technology Tools and the Curriculum
- d. EDTC33520: Digital Citizenship in 21st Century Schools
- e. SPED08540: Technology for Students with Special Needs

3. *Summary of COGS Course Assignments & Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards*

a. *Introduction to Educational Technology*

The course began with a differentiation between digital native and digital immigrants, and this distinction set the tone for my analysis of my own instructional practices in my classroom. As I had identified in a discussion board posting, while still under the decade mark of my career, I am still facing approximately 20% of my rosters being digital immigrants. Often, this relates to socioeconomic status, lack of resources, or parental choices. I used this as the basis for all instructional discussions and choices made in this course. As Prensky stated, “Often from the Natives’ point of view, their Digital Immigrant instructors make their education *not worth* paying attention to compared to everything else they experience - and then they blame them for not paying attention!” (2001). Understanding the perspective and needs of the digital immigrants is just as vital in the modern classroom as understanding one’s language or basic learning needs.

During this course, I had the opportunity to develop a Google Site with my colleagues to represent an area of student importance to all of us. As a team, we developed lessons, backed by standards, created a discussion board, developed assessments, and provided rubrics for teachers to demonstrate mastery of social and emotional learning, as well as its five competencies in the state of New Jersey (Moore et al. 2020). This website was a culmination of our understanding of how to utilize technology as a collection of resources as well as how to provide resources in a conducive environment for digital immigrants and natives alike.

This course and its major assignments best connect to Domains I and VII of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Domain I relates to fostering collaboration to support educator development, and my work with my group for the final project (Google Site) did just that. As a cross-section of grade levels and subject areas, social and emotional learning was a topic which

resonated with all of us, and we felt it was the best material to showcase to reach all of our varied learners. We shared the resources and knowledge we had and helped each other grow in an area that matters to all of us. Additionally, this course connects with Domain VII. This domain “advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and other material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals” (“Teacher Leader” n.d.). This course provided me with the opportunity to utilize a digital platform to provide teachers with information to impact the way they teach their students. Our Google Site served as a hub for resources on social and emotional learning, a topic that can impact any teacher at any level.

b. Internet in the Classroom

This class focused on all aspects of incorporating the internet into the classroom, including but not limited to frameworks, applications, and concerns. Understanding and utilizing the TTIPP framework for internet integration into the classroom provided the structure for meaningful use of digital tools in the learning process. Through work with the framework and comparisons to the work of Vygotsky, Bandura, Garner, and Dewey, I was able to determine how educational theories can impact the application of technology in the classroom (Sickler_Assignment 1_EDTC33585). Student centered learning, high levels of engagement, and opportunities for reflection establish the links between the TTIPP and educational and learning theories that demonstrate the validity of internet application. Applying this knowledge as a foundation, I was able to utilize the TTIPP to develop a unit plan for my own classroom with technology integrated lessons. These lessons and their technology integration helped me to begin planning to address specific issues I had identified in my own classroom, such as citing sources

properly, increasing engagement while using digital resources, and following the writing format with digital tools (Sickler_CulminatingProject_EDTC33585).

A significant emphasis of this course was on cyberbullying and afforded me the opportunity to interview one of my administrators to analyze a current cyberbullying case at my school. In working with my vice principal, I was able to conclude that “the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning structure added challenges to the investigation as well as administration of consequences to the offenders as well as the follow-up and accessibility to the victim to ensure her physical and mental well being” (Sickler_Assignment5_EDTC33585). As a leader in my building, this information helped me to consider the ways in which we as teachers can combat cyberbullying and continue to promote positive digital citizenship and positive student relationships.

This course and its major assignments best connect to Domains IV of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Within this domain, teacher leaders use “knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe” (“Teacher Leader” n.d.). The use of digital tools and the analysis of cyberbullying and its impact on student life allowed me to use my platform as a teacher leader with extensive educational technology knowledge to support teachers to effectively use technology in the classroom.

c. Emerging Technology Tools and the Curriculum

This class focused on meaningful application of tools in a curriculum to maximize student engagement and student learning. Throughout this course, I learned that my comfort zone with technology tends to be in the realm of presentation software. I feel that using technology as

a means to express what you know or have learned is a creative approach to content and can connect with multiple types of learners. Being able to work with Google Sites actually met a personal goal of mine in being able to practice using the technology in preparation for the remaining courses in my major and for my own classroom (Sickler_Assignment9_EDTC33510).

The culminating project in this class was to develop a Google Site portfolio which consisted of a critical thinking project, a creative project, a problem based project, and a technology supported group project that can be implemented into a classroom today (Sickler 2021). Focusing on curriculum development with a technology lens helped improve my lesson planning abilities and to consider differentiated ways I can provide my students methods to receive information as well as produce work to demonstrate their understanding.

This course and its major assignments best connect to Domains IV of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Along with the more obvious connection of technology integration, this course represents Domain IV through its reflective dialogue and its opportunities to turnkey and promote “instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction” (“Teacher Leader” n.d.).

d. Digital Citizenship in 21st Century Schools

This class focused on the development of a digital citizenship curriculum for schools and districts to be able to implement instantly. With a team of other middle school teachers, I was able to identify the best practices for a digital citizenship curriculum, create a rubric to establish effectiveness of a curriculum, and develop a presentation for a school district to promote our newly established curriculum. As students during the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital etiquette became must more imperative for us, and as a result, we designed a comprehensive curriculum to

address both current and future needs for appropriate digital integration and digital use (BoteroCamizziCaseSickler_Assignment3). Our presentation, developed with the intention of sharing at a board of Education meeting, outlines our rationale, core values, and necessary components to truly address the needs of the HTSD, my home district (1-to-1-Middle-Slideshow_Final).

This course and its major assignments best connect to Domain III and Domain VII of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. As a team, my group and I worked “to collect, analyze, and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning” (“Teacher Leader” n.d.). We collaborated over our experiences in middle school, selected a focus district, and began researching what existed in order to determine what needs were evident for our digital citizenship curriculum. Domain VII focusing on advocating for students and the profession. In my cohort of middle school teachers, we used our rubric, curriculum, and presentation to share essential information, backed by research, that can impact the instruction of students as well as the expectations for student learning. Additionally, in developing this proposed curriculum, we advocated for our students outside of the classroom by addressing essential district level changes.

e. Technology for Students with Special Needs

This course emphasized how to differentiate instruction while utilizing technology. As a teacher of both general and inclusion students, I found this to be one of the more pertinent and relatable courses to my current position. I had learned that assistive technology doesn’t have a “one size fits all approach” and can look different depending on the technology being utilized. The Accessibility Technology Lab allowed me to try different forms of this technology to determine how to access, how to use, and how to best utilize each tool academically

(Sickler_Assignment4p1_SPED08540). Throughout this course, the utilization of assistive technologies demonstrated how to differentiate instruction in different ways. Assistive technology reviews helped to conclude which tools are the most valuable, financially and academically, and which are less beneficial for students. Additionally, the emphasis on evaluating students' needs to ensure they receive the proper assistive technology provided essential skills for me as I continue in my role as an inclusion teacher.

During the course, I was able to evaluate the instructional needs of two of my students to identify their technological needs as specified in their IEPs (Sickler_Assignment1_SPED08540). I then delve further into each students' education by evaluating their current conditions to establish educational need for assistive technology (Sickler_Assignment3_SPED08540). Using anecdotal evidence, I concluded that both students would benefit from assistive technology in the form of text-to-speech; however, one of the two students would greatly benefit from graphic organizers, task lists, and the use of Grammarly to proofread their written work.

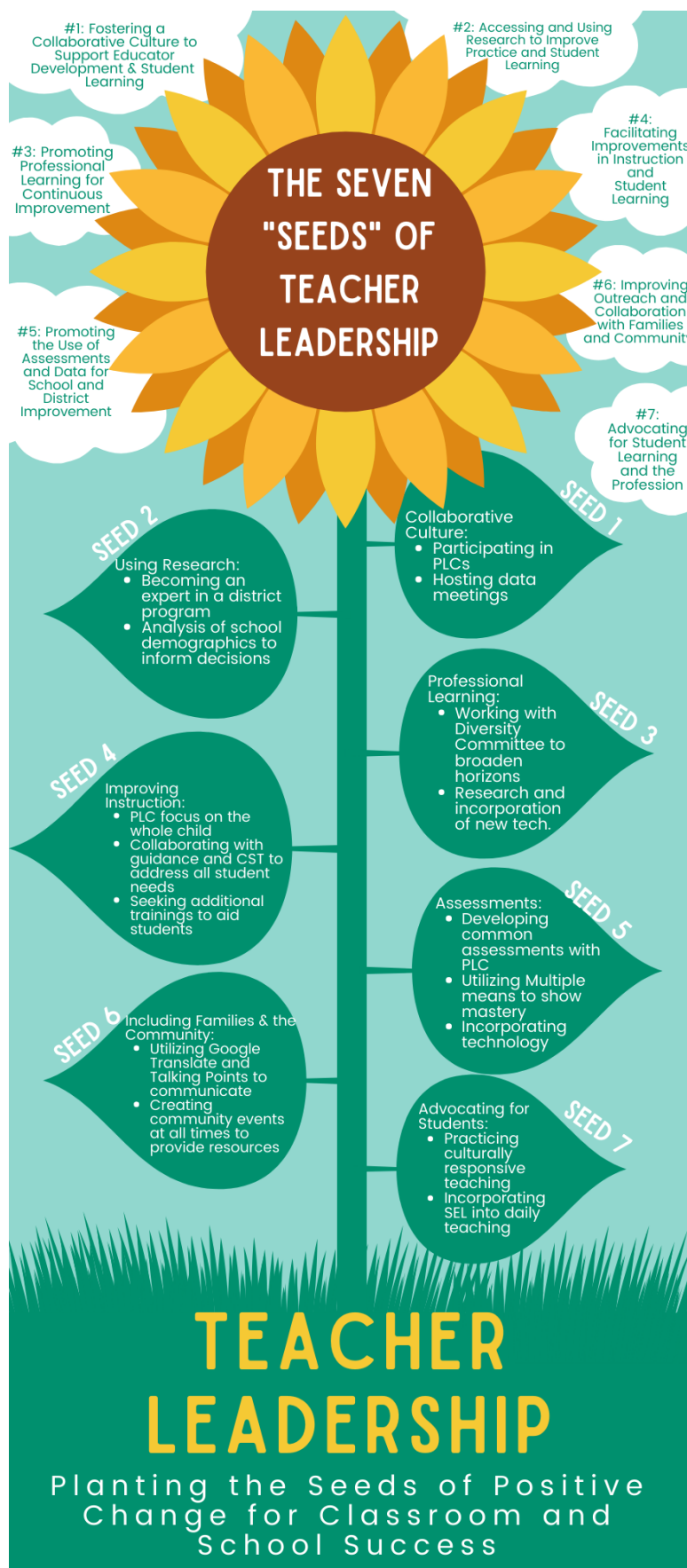
While many of the Teacher Leader Model Standard domains cover data driven practices, this course and its major assignments best to Domain VII. Advocating for the students includes but is not limited to ensuring all students have access to materials and have what they need to be successful in class. Applying the appropriate accommodations and assistive technology methods affords all students the same opportunity to learn. Teacher leaders speak on behalf of the students and their needs, whether analog or digital, and this course provided me with more information to do just that.

11. Teacher

Graphic

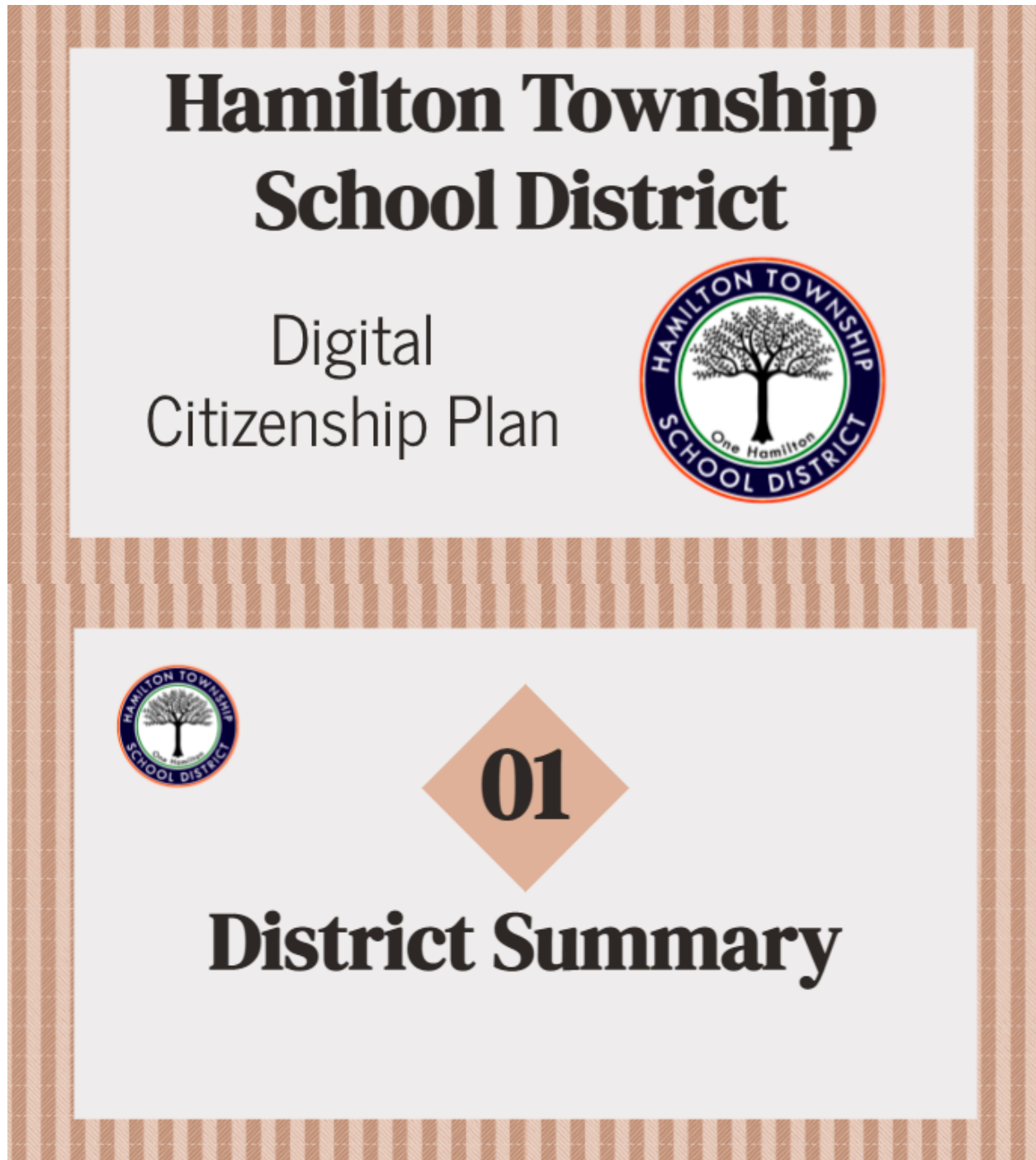
Leadership

Organizer



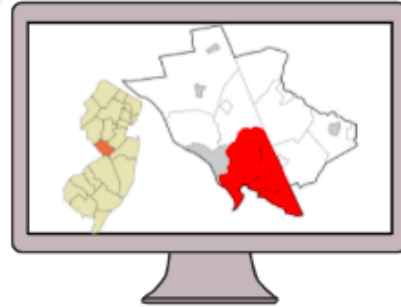
12. Artifacts

a. 1-to-1-Middle-Slideshow_Final - Digital Citizenship in 21st Century Schools



- ❖ The **Hamilton Township School District (HTSD)** is located in Hamilton Township, Mercer County, New Jersey.
- ❖ The ninth largest district in the state, the HTSD consists of nearly 12,400 students and 1,800 staff members. It is responsible for providing digital access to all to ensure the best educational experiences to foster student success.
- ❖ The district contains seventeen elementary schools, three middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative program for middle and high school students.
- ❖ HTSD services families from all levels of socioeconomic status, including but not limited to the 39.5% of families identified as "economically disadvantaged" and the 5.6% of families that fall below the poverty line.

Hamilton Township School District: HTSD



The district's theme: Hamilton Opens Pathways to Excellence



- ❖ As of the 2020-2021 school year, the entire HTSD district has move to a 1:1 technology infrastructure.
- ❖ This means that the district was responsible for providing all kindergarten to grade two students with a tablet and all students from third grade to twelfth with a Chromebook.
- ❖ While a device distribution plan is in effect, the district does not currently have an individualized digital citizenship curriculum. Instead, the district directs students, parents, and teachers to a variety of links for digital citizenship resources.
- ❖ By adhering to the proposed changes to policy and curriculum, the HTSD will address equity issues and will ensure all pathways are open for all students to be successful this year and for years to come.



Hamilton Township School District's Digital Citizenship Philosophy

"Digital citizenship is about much more than online safety — or a long list of don'ts. It's also about the do's that help create thoughtful, empathetic digital citizens who can wrestle with the important ethical questions at the intersection of technology and humanity.

Those do's include:

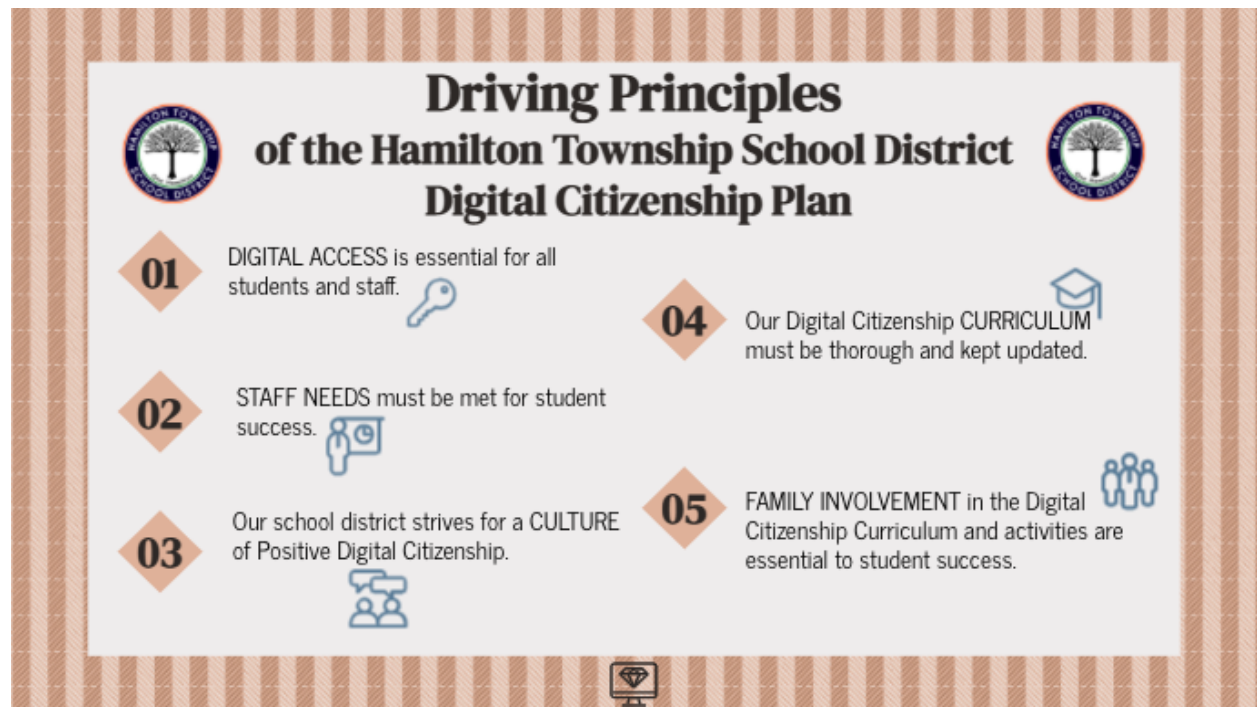
- Using technology to make your community better.
- Engaging respectfully online with people who have different beliefs than you.
- Using technology to make your voice heard by public leaders and to shape public policy.
- Determining the validity of online sources of information.

This new lens focuses on empowering learners to be in community with others in online spaces and showing them that digital citizenship goes beyond conversations about personal responsibility. It's about being active citizens who see possibilities instead of problems and opportunities instead of risks as they curate a positive and effective digital footprint."

— ISTE.org




Driving Principles




Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

01

DIGITAL ACCESS for students and staff



❖ Hamilton Twp. School Board and Administration are committed to DIGITAL ACCESS for all students and staff both in school and at home for school work. For students to succeed, staff and students need reliable servers, network, and wifi as well as up-to-date, fully functional equipment both in school and at home. Providing adequate access both in school and at home allows students and staff to work quickly and efficiently allowing them to reach their full potential. Giving students and staff school email accounts to use when creating accounts and doing other school work protects them online and protects the school from liability. The district is dedicated to closing Hamilton's digital divide.



Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

02

Meet STAFF NEEDS



- ❖ The School Board and Administration are committed to meeting STAFF NEEDS. Meeting staff needs allows teachers to provide the best educational experience to our student body. The educators are professionals who are dedicated to providing up to date high quality instruction to our students; meeting their professional development, technology, and instructional needs will help them do so in harmony with the other staff members and the schools curricula and policies. To teach a Digital Citizenship Curriculum, staff need to be given up-to-date training on the curriculum and any specific programs or applications, digital curriculum, acceptable use policy, subject area integration, and expectations for cyberbullying or other misuses of technology. Additionally, staff is encouraged to observe colleagues using technology effectively in their classrooms to see a positive model for application.



Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

03

CULTURE of Positive Digital Citizenship.



- ❖ The School Board and Administration is committed to establishing a CULTURE of positive digital citizenship. Developing and maintaining a culture of positive digital citizenship helps students see the correct behaviors and know how to be a respectful digital citizen. Both students and staff are more likely to accept and cultivate in this positive digital citizenship culture when they have a voice in how it works. A Digital Citizenship Committee of administration, staff, parents, community stakeholders, and students (when age appropriate) that discusses the way the school deals with cyberbullying and other social issues, and all digital policies and curricula, where their suggestions and and ideas for improvement/updating are heard and considered. This committee will start at the building level then have a representative share the build committee's viewpoints at a district level where recommendations will then be made to the board of education. This will encourage all school community members to build the culture of positive digital citizenship because they are represented in the process.



Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

04

Digital Citizenship CURRICULUM



- ❖ The School Board and Administration is committed to approving a thorough digital citizenship CURRICULUM, including a cohesive K-12 and covers each area of digital citizenship at a grade appropriate level: Digital Access, Commerce, Communication, Literacy, Etiquette, Law, Rights and Responsibilities, Health and Wellness, and Security. It will be a well designed curriculum and as infused within the fabric of each subject as technology is infused in teaching and learning within it. Digital literacy applies to all digital environments, so a generic curriculum allows students to apply these digital skills and information across all platforms even as they change over time. The curriculum will include students' families in the learning process as it is important to student application in their lives outside of school by providing information to families regularly. Just like all teaching, the Digital Citizenship Curriculum will be focused on the students who are learning it. The content, examples, and depth of the lessons should match the age and ability of the learners. This curriculum will also include guided practice opportunities for students with teacher feedback, teacher-facilitated discussions about various aspects of digital literacy, lessons about permanence and online reputation, and have students reflect on learning regularly. It will be evaluated at least once every three years to keep it updated.



Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

05

Establish and maintain Family Involvement.



- ❖ Hamilton Twp. School Board and Administration is committed to establishing and maintaining FAMILY INVOLVEMENT in the digital citizenship curriculum and activities. Including students' families in the learning process is important to student application in their lives outside of school. The district will provide information to families regularly, informing parents about all school digital policies and curricula, developing assignments and activities to send home that involve family participation, give parents tips to talk to child(ren) about cyberbullying from the perspective of being bullied and not becoming a bully themselves, and information about being a good example when interacting with people both online and in-person, showing how to be a good digital citizen.



Hamilton Township's Digital Citizenship Driving Principles

05

Establish and maintain Family Involvement.



- ❖ Hamilton Twp. School Board and Administration is committed to establishing and maintaining FAMILY INVOLVEMENT in the digital citizenship curriculum and activities. Including students' families in the learning process is important to student application in their lives outside of school. The district will provide information to families regularly, informing parents about all school digital policies and curricula, developing assignments and activities to send home that involve family participation, give parents tips to talk to child(ren) about cyberbullying from the perspective of being bullied and not becoming a bully themselves, and information about being a good example when interacting with people both online and in-person, showing how to be a good digital citizen.



Policy Change Recommendations for DIGITAL ACCESS:



Our recommendation for policy changes regarding DIGITAL ACCESS are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that each building is equipped with wifi, servers, and network that are fast enough to handle all students and staff online at any given time.
- ❖ We recommend that staff and students are provided with updated operational equipment for working digitally.
- ❖ We recommend that all staff and students be provided with school email accounts so they can create school accounts on all programs and applications for school use.
- ❖ We recommend that the District set aside funds specifically to provide "hot spots" to households that are unable to provide it for their students. We can partner with local businesses to support this endeavour.

Policy Change Recommendations for STAFF NEEDS:



Our recommendation for policy changes regarding STAFF NEEDS are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that staff is given specific professional development on programs and applications that are expected to be used in the classroom.
- ❖ We recommend that staff is given specific professional development on digital curriculum, acceptable use policy, subject area integration, and district expectations for handling instances of cyberbullying or other misuses of technology.
- ❖ We recommend that staff is provided these aforementioned professional development opportunities at regular intervals and on varying levels of technical capabilities.
- ❖ We recommend that staff is given time in PLCs to develop lessons and share ideas about various apps and programs.
- ❖ We recommend that staff is given opportunities to observe colleagues using technology effectively in their classrooms, to serve as a positive model for application.

Policy Change Recommendations for Creating a CULTURE of Positive Digital Citizenship:



Our recommendation for creating a CULTURE for positive digital citizenship are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that the District create a Digital Citizenship team of administration, staff, parents, and students (when age appropriate) to discuss all digital policies and curricula that the district provides, examining gap analysis data and providing updates as needed.
- ❖ We recommend that administration/staff be given the directive that they be the models of top digital citizens. Therefore, students will see their example in their everyday lives as the social norm and expected behavior.
- ❖ We recommend that the policy on Cyberbullying be clear with high standards. Infractions should be dealt with swiftly and thoroughly. The consequences should be standard and administered fairly and consistently.

Policy Change Recommendations for Digital Citizenship Curriculum:



Our recommendation for policy changes regarding DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that the District approved Curriculum is cohesive, designed for grades K-12, and covers each following areas of the nine areas of digital citizenship at a grade/age appropriate level: digital access, digital commerce, digital communication, digital literacy, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness and digital security.
- ❖ We recommend that the curriculum integrate digital literacy into every class, so that each subject includes technology that is infused in teaching and learning.
- ❖ We recommend the adoption of relevant and generic applications and platforms. Digital apps and platforms are changing everyday. The individual use of apps and platforms by students may be inconsistent. Therefore, the District needs to keep its digital products generic, so the students can apply these digital skills and information across all platforms.
- ❖ We recommend the alignment of curriculum objectives to be considerate of student abilities and age appropriateness. Curriculum content, examples, and depth of the lessons should match the age and ability of the learners.

Policy Change Recommendations for Digital Citizenship Curriculum continued:



Our recommendation for policy changes regarding DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that the curriculum include students' families in the learning process, and helps to provide information for families regularly.
- ❖ We recommend that the curriculum include teacher-facilitated guided practice and discussion opportunities for students about various aspects of digital literacy with teacher feedback. We also need to include teaching students to verify the accuracy of the information they read, teaching students about permanence and online reputation, and teaching students to reflect on their digital citizenship practices regularly.
- ❖ We recommend that the Curriculum is evaluated at least once every three years to keep it updated.



04

Recommended Instructional Program Changes

Policy Change Recommendations for Family Involvement in the Digital Citizenship Curriculum:



Our recommendation for policy changes regarding FAMILY INVOLVEMENT are as follows:

- ❖ We recommend that the District inform parents about all school digital policies and curricula.
- ❖ We recommend that teachers send reminders to parents to be an active observer when their child(ren) comes home with digital school work.
- ❖ We recommend the development of assignments and activities to send home that involve family participation.
- ❖ We recommend hosting workshops that give parents tips to talk to child(ren) about cyberbullying.
- ❖ We recommend sending home information about how parents can set a good example when interacting with people both online and in-person to model how to be a good digital citizen for their child(ren).

Recommended Instructional Program Changes for the Curriculum:



Our recommendation for instructional program changes for the CURRICULUM are as follows:

- ❖ Changes to the curriculum should be turnkeyed and taught to the teachers to bring about the necessary changes to improve the digital citizenship curriculum.
- ❖ At every level of education in the district, students need to be taught the nine principles of digital citizenship to varying degrees, creating a spiral structure within the curriculum where each teacher essentially picks up where the last teacher left off, and dives deeper into the principles at an age appropriate level, and with consideration of all student abilities.
- ❖ We recommend investing in generic and relevant applications and platforms for effective instructional purposes. This will allow the district to adopt and invest in long term use of technology versus changing too often to meet the "trends" in digital education.
- ❖ We recommend the addition of lessons, activities and practices that include families in the instructional process. This instructional shift to include them is necessary to ensure that whenever students are online (school or home) they are engaging in safe and positive educational experiences.

Recommended Instructional Program Changes for STAFF NEEDS:



Our recommendation for instructional program changes for STAFF NEEDS are as follows:

- ❖ We recommended that staff be given specific professional development on programs and applications that they are expected to use in the classroom, and these opportunities should be provided at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- ❖ We recommend that a district wide committee be used to decide on the most appropriate schedule and list of topics to cover that align with the needs of the staff at the time.
- ❖ We recommend that professional development sessions be offered at varying levels of technical capabilities, to ensure that all staff is receiving targeted professional development.
- ❖ We recommend that staff be given time in PLCs to develop lessons and share ideas about various apps and programs. They could plan classroom visits that would allow opportunities to observe colleagues using technology effectively in their classrooms, and serve as a positive model for application.

**05**

Recommended Process for Continuous Improvement

Recommended Process for Continuous Improvement: Frequency of Evaluation



The Digital Citizenship Plan should be reviewed by the following two groups:

- I. Digital Citizenship Committee
 - ❖ Annual review of how the digital citizenship plan is working
 - ❖ Focus on small scale issues
 - ❖ Make minor adjustments to the plan as needed
- II. Board of Education
 - ❖ Review the digital citizenship plan every three years
 - ❖ Ensure that the digital citizenship plan is adhering to federal and state legislation regarding digital citizenship
 - ❖ Address any larger scale issues and revamp the plan if necessary
 - ❖ Work with the digital citizenship committee

Recommended Process for Continuous Improvement: Necessary Stakeholders and Committees for Evaluation



The following list shows the necessary stakeholders and committees that will work to evaluate the digital citizenship plan:

- ❖ Digital Citizenship Committee
 - Committee at the individual school level
 - Committee at the district level made up of representatives from each school
- ❖ Board of Education
- ❖ Parent/Community Member Panel
- ❖ Student Panel
 - Made up of students at the middle and high school level

Recommended Process for Continuous Improvement: Assessment and Data for Evaluation



When evaluating the digital citizenship plan, we recommend using a variety of assessments and data to give a full picture of the effectiveness. These assessments and data include:

- ❖ Digital citizenship curriculum rubric
- ❖ Grade-band benchmark assessment
 - Assessing students' digital citizenship competencies
 - Grades 5, 8, and 11
- ❖ Reported cases of cyberbullying
 - Does the data show cases increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same?
- ❖ Compliance with federal and state legislation regarding digital citizenship
 - Ensure that the digital citizenship plan remains compliant with legislation

06

Conclusion



In summary...

- ❖ Funding technological and digital resources are a top priority.
- ❖ Increased funding for technology and digital resources leads to enhanced equity and access for all learners in the district.
- ❖ Students will be the ones who benefit the most from the adaptation of this plan.
- ❖ This plan is based on principle instead of specific technologies. Therefore, the plan will remain relevant for years to come.
- ❖ This plan allows for a committee of qualified teachers and staff members to come together to review, revise, and adjust the plan as needed.



Final Thoughts



Hamilton Township School District's motto is "Hamilton Opens Pathways to Excellence." By instituting our digital citizenship plan, HTSD is opening up a pathway for a generation of respectful, responsible, intelligent, and caring digital citizens. Without any changes to the plan HTSD is currently using, students will not be prepared to be good digital citizens in an increasingly digital world.

Instituting our plan will leave a lasting impact on the students of HTSD and will be carried with them through their time as a student and beyond. Our plan will give students the tools necessary to navigate the ever-evolving digital world that we live in.

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The 1:1 Middle School Team



**Damaris
Botero**



**June
Camizzi**



**Megan
Case**



**Meghan
Sickler**

b. BoteroCamizziCaseSickler_Assignment3 - Digital Citizenship in 21st Century Schools

Assignment 3: 1-to-1 Middle School Peer Group

Checklist for Digital Citizenship Best Practices

Botero, Camizzi, Case, & Sickler

I. Best Practices for Digital Citizenship Curriculum

- Teacher Responsibilities:
 - Integrate digital literacy across all subject areas - Digital Literacy should be taught, not just in computer class, but infused within the fabric of each subject as technology is infused in teaching and learning within it.
 - Keep relevant - Stay generic - Digital apps and platforms are changing everyday. Students may be using apps you are not aware of, but digital literacy applies to all digital environments, so keep things generic so the students can apply these digital skills and information across all platforms.
 - Teacher-facilitated discussions- These conversations are important to allow the teacher to keep track of student concerns and enduring understandings, while allowing the teacher to guide the students towards the most important ideas that will support their digital citizenship best practices.
 - Guided practice opportunities for students with teacher feedback- Supervised practice opportunities are essential for students to have a safe environment to practice their use of technology. The teacher feedback is a necessary component for students to adjust their practices.

- Information for parents to continue the discussion at home- Parents should be provided with relevant information and suggestions for how they can continue the conversations about best practices at home to ensure their child's success.
- Emphasis on the implications of technology use - teachers should stress how both positive and negative digital footprints impact more than just the student leaving the mark.
- Teach students to verify the accuracy of the information they read- Students need a set of standards to follow when verifying online sources to ensure the integrity of what they're reading and their safety when searching online.
- Teach students about permanence and online reputation- Online presence and the digital footprint are important factors for students to understand in order to practice responsible online behaviors.
- Teach students about self-reflection while using technology tools, allow time for reflection
- Curriculum covers each area of digital citizenship at a level appropriate to the grade and age level of the students. Including: Digital Access, Digital Commerce, Digital Communication, Digital Literacy, Digital Etiquette, Digital Law, Digital Rights and Responsibilities, Digital Health and Wellness, and Digital Security.
- Student Responsibilities:

- No personal accounts in the classroom - Students should use school-provided accounts to create and share on the internet. This protects them, but it also keeps students who would not be able to create personal accounts because of lack of resources, at the same full digital access as other students.
- Student self-reflection- Students need to reflect in a timely manner on their practices to integrate and adjust their best practices.
- Home/Family Responsibilities:
 - Family connection - participate as an active member in the learning process by maintaining communication with teachers regarding technology and digital resource use.
 - Support Teacher Resources- As the teacher shares materials and resources with families, families should continue to reinforce practices and have conversations to support the learning.
 - Adult models - Adult and family members should model digital citizenship best practices
 - Personal accounts - Encourage students to continue using digital citizenship best practices while at home and while using personal accounts
- School/District Responsibilities:
 - Ability and age appropriate - Digital Citizenship Curriculum should be focused on the students who are learning it. The content, examples, and depth of the lessons should match the age and ability of the learners.

- Adult models - All staff should be models of top digital citizens in every lesson and activity so students see it in their everyday lives as the social norm and expected behavior.
- Provide and monitor student accounts - provide students with accounts to be used on all student platforms, model appropriate behaviors, and monitor for misuse.
- Meaningful professional development - Teacher training needs to be deliberate and constant with time for planning with colleagues to effectively deliver the curriculum.

Categories: Pedagogy, Subject Matter, Inclusion/Connection	No Evidence	Some Evidence	Ample Evidence
Curriculum is able to be adapted in all content area courses. It is not restrictive based on the lessons and activities provided. Connections to all subjects are provided within the curriculum (example: learning opportunities for mathematics, social studies, English language arts, etc.)			
Curriculum has been revised within the past five years to adjust for changing applications and technologies to maintain relevance for students and staff. Varied platforms are utilized throughout the curriculum to integrate both older and newer technology to teach digital citizenship.			
Curriculum lessons and activities are age appropriate regarding content area knowledge, vocabulary, and student technology knowledge. Students are able, with minimal scaffolding, to complete each task provided in the lesson plans of the curriculum.			
Curricular activities incorporate guided practice to provide modeling of proper application and etiquette when utilizing digital resources.			
Curricular activities incorporate student driven discussion, collaboration, and reflection.			
Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum provides solutions for teachers for access issues amongst students. - Curriculum addresses modifications for digitally driven lessons to adapt for inequitable distribution of technology in the district. 			
Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum provides students with activities to explore the tools and safeguards used to assist those buying, selling, banking, or using money in any way in the digital space. 			
Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum requires that all users define how 			

<p>they will share their thoughts so that others understand the message.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum teaches students that technology can help them find their own voices and express themselves. - Curriculum incorporates the use of digital communication platforms for student activities (example: writing on a shared document) 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum includes the discussion of media literacy and the ability to discern good information from poor information, such as “fake news” from real news. 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Etiquette</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum incorporates electronic standards of conduct or procedures that relate to the process of thinking about Digital Security and Privacy as precautions to guarantee student safety. - Curriculum includes Digital Etiquette practices as part of the classroom rules or academic goals, creating an awareness that whether in the classroom or online, being aware of others is important. 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum incorporates the laws that refer to the responsibility of students for actions and deeds online. - Curriculum allows for students to help develop rules and policy that address issues related to the online world. For example, District Acceptable Use Policy. - Curriculum provides support to students for issues such as cyberbullying and sexting from School Resource Officers and other school counselors. 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Rights and Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum addresses the district's acceptable use policy and how it applies to students. - Curriculum provides scenarios for staff to model appropriate use of online resources. - Curricular activities incorporate identifying 			

<p>cyberbullying of classmates and friends and how to tell an adult about it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curricular activities incorporate self-evaluation by students of their online activities in comparison to a cyberbully's activities to help determine if cyberbully tendencies exist. 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Health and Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum includes instruction on finding a healthy balance of technology use (ex: limiting screen time). - Curriculum provides facts regarding the negative consequences of overexposure and overuse of technology. - Curriculum provides information and activities regarding how media can distort reality and impact self-perception. - Curriculum includes best practices for physical use of technology (ex: proper ergonomic posture). 			
<p>Covers digital citizenship area: Digital Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum provides instruction on identifying cyberattacks and how to prevent them. - Curriculum instructs students how to keep personal information (including passwords) private. 			
<p>Curricular activities establish a connection between the classroom and homelife through written communication, extension activities, and parent and family feedback.</p>			
<p>Curriculum provides opportunities in each lesson for students to demonstrate positive digital citizenship through interactions with staff, peers, and other members of the school community. Curriculum also encourages positive interactions on outside of school platforms and during outside of school activities.</p>			
<p>Curricular activities incorporate applying digital literacy and citizenship to online activities in and out of school. For example communicating with classmates and/or friends on social media.</p>			

References

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Ribble, M. (2017). Nine elements. Retrieved April 14, 2021, from

<https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>

e. Group 3_MA1_METL50511 - Teacher Leadership & Learning Communities**Introduction**

The plan established below can be used to create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in schools. The definition of a Professional Learning Community is “a group of educators (teachers, administrators, consultants, support staff, and/or parents) who focus their work on the formal study of instructional practices in order to improve their students’ learning” (Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2020, p. 6). The plan can also be used to improve existing PLCs in schools in order to reorient the PLCs’ goal(s) to establish Classroom Learning Communities (CLCs). The plan is broken down into several stages, beginning with preparation and the establishment of roles, norms, and expectations through the transitions and/or closure of the PLC. In doing so, this plan establishes a framework for how to navigate conflict-resolution, goal setting, progress monitoring, data analysis, and sharing weaknesses or strengths with colleagues to assist in the group’s overall professional development. A pivotal component of a PLC is the essence of working in a community, and through working together to achieve professional goals, colleagues will deprivatize their teaching to expose best practices for student success.

By successfully implementing the five stages provided in this plan, teacher leaders will have participated in all of the components of a PLC to therefore model and facilitate a CLC within their own classrooms. In order to improve school culture, the culture within the classroom must be the foundation. There are several possibilities when a PLC is conducted correctly; a PLC can allow the members to “get acquainted, build initial trust, foster appreciation of multi abilities, establish each person’s voice, and create self-assessments” (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 20). If these facets can be achieved between adult members of a PLC, they can also be achieved

between classmates within a CLC. If students have the opportunity to participate in CLCs and develop the higher order thinking, communication, and collaboration skills necessary to conduct themselves within a CLC appropriately, they can improve the overall school culture. Students would feel valued and connected to their environment, and interdependence would be fostered with their peers. Ultimately, this plan will disrupt the status quo of a school to challenge teachers' and students' predispositions regarding how schools should function and what can be gained from a school experience.

Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric

Creating and Maintaining a Productive Professional Learning Community or Learning Organization	Yes	No	Comments/Notes
<i>Preparation for Getting Started</i>			
Plans are in place for Establishment of PLC development of Beginnings & Establishing Expectations Stages of Group Development- includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus for creating an effective group culture (getting acquainted, trust-building, fostering appreciation of multiple abilities) ● Plans for identifying goals, expectations, norms, roles, rules, and identification of facilitator, recorder, timer ● Plans for assessing learner achievement and setting goals 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Groups must become acquainted with each other; PLC members should not make assumptions on what they know about each other. ● Not having the time to get acquainted or the trust building can impact the effectiveness of the PLC long-term. ● All members should contribute equally; Roles must change so all have an equal opportunity to perform all roles ● Goal creation can be challenging when subjects areas of “tested vs. non-tested” subject matters have conflicting goals. If creating classroom learning communities is the goal, this conflict should be eliminated because all subject areas have the same goal. ● Administration takes an active role and with members ensures the job gets done correctly. ● All members need to agree on the

			<p>multiple measures of success. Admin should have input on the measure of success to alleviate the differing opinions amongst staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should be a part of the conversation about their own success/goal-setting in a CLC.
Agenda sent out to members at least 1 day prior to meetings, includes items identified by the group	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agendas should have information that prepares members for the meeting, including what to bring, and ideas to think about. Create the agenda in the previous meeting so everyone knows what to prepare and to expect in the next meeting. Agenda should be shared with Admin. so members can be held accountable. See sample <u>agenda</u> template that could be used by the PLC The agenda should be made at the prior meeting so members have plenty of time to complete their responsibilities before the meeting.
Meeting room is set up and ready for meeting and sessions start on time, room clean and well organized		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting space, either physical or virtual should be decided by the team members so individual preferences can be taken into consideration. Virtual meetings are a solution when an appropriate physical meeting space is not available. This can also cause a challenge because members can be distracted by home life. CLCs are also influenced by the setup of the classroom
<i>Stage 1 Beginnings</i>			
Focus on members' growing knowledge about each other (naming, getting acquainted, trust-building, strengths, goals, sharing visions)	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key term is "growing knowledge" because it is not a fixed situation. Knowledge changes and evolves therefore we should be continuing to "get-acquainted" despite knowing each other. Adjustable and flexible goals.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trust can be lost very quickly when members are disrespectful or when they disagree and it can disrupt the functionality of the group working together.
Focus on assessment of learner achievement over last two to three years	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flexibility for the goals for student success. Sometimes success for the student is not just learner achievement, a large component can be school integration and parent involvement. If a student meets these criteria they are considered successful. Behavior analysis, etc. ● Multiple measures of success, not just test scores, and not just one score.
Identify strategies for making data-based decisions	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Usage of data platforms that can help with analysis and create reports of the data for staff to have easier access to what the data actually means. Training on how to use the data platforms. ● Continue to use data analysis to see improvement or digression of the data.
All members become part of leadership for PLC	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members of the PLC should switch roles in order to all experience the leadership role. ● All members should have ownership over their contribution to the goals, and members must buy-in to what is trying to be done. Rotation of roles will be established by the time frame of the goal of the PLC. ● This also models behavior for students in a successful CLC
Group adopts and implements roles for effective group work - (e.g. facilitator, recorder, timer, communicator - emails notes and agendas)	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members of the PLC should switch roles in order to all experience the leadership role. ● All members should have ownership over their contribution to the goals, and members must buy-in to what is trying to be done.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience fulfilling roles of the PLC will allow members to model roles for students within CLCs.
Establishes norms for group participation including individual voices, paraphrasing, listening, connecting contributions, identifying differences	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members should repeat or summarize what the other member said before them in order to show that they are listening and not just waiting to share their own thoughts and opinions. ● If they do this they will make connections and contribute to the overall conversation.
Assesses current culture and begins to identify goals for new culture	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Groups should have reflection on PLC involvement or effectiveness. Anonymous survey so members feel safe to be honest about PLC. ● Involve students in assessing classroom culture to improve the CLC ● A plan is made to do something with the results of the survey, it is not a survey just to do a survey.
At end of meetings group reviews meeting experiences, notes feedback, acknowledges how it will be used in planning next meeting	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End every meeting with a “Plus - Delta” where team members contribute things that either went well or things that can be changed. The moderator at the end cannot add value to what is said. ● Students in CLC will have the chance to reflect on their experiences (i.e. Closing Meeting from Responsive Classroom) ● Agenda needs to be made for the following meeting.
<i>Stage 2 - Establishing Expectations</i>			
Goals and expectations discussed, explored, described in detail	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have an objective and make it clear so that all members are on the same page; SMART goal keeps all accountable ● Goals can be large and span a full year or smaller and span shorter time periods (such as marking periods). Goal and length of time to achieve the goal will be determined by the PLC.

Identifies areas where conflicts are predictable		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focusing on the negative is not conducive to the progress of the group ● Students can determine what conflicts they have encountered and brainstorm ways to solve them ● Be prepared for conflicts at any time
Identifies conflict resolution steps to be used by the group	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Procedure so everyone knows what they need to do if a conflict arises. ● Prior to conflict arising, model scenarios with students in CLC to follow the resolution steps, and have students practice fulfilling roles
Members increase knowledge about others in the PLC		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We believe that this step can be achieved by the step below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Activities can help identify strengths of all staff (so that they can be shared with the group) and fosters an appreciation of multi-abilities” ○ We should be focused on the strengths and weaknesses of other PLC members rather than the knowledge and experience.
Activities establish each stakeholder’s voice (different goals, different points of view) (e.g. 1st-grade basic skills versus 5th-grade concepts)	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brings different perspectives into the group so that we keep in mind the goals of all departments. ● Fishbowl examples of conflicts for students to share ideas and solutions
Activities can help identify strengths of all staff (so that they can be shared with the group) and fosters an appreciation of multi-abilities	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be aware of members’ skills and strengths so that we can know who to lean on for help and assistance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team Building ○ Reflective practices ○ Survey of group members’ skills
Individuals do and share self-assessments Identifies & establishes Norms for whole school or the Professional Learning Communities as subsets:	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing this prior to setting goals. School wide norms keep everyone on a level playing field. ● CLCs will create their own rules and expectations to include routines,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discourse ● Cooperation ● Respect ● Rules ● Roles ● Routines ● Procedures 			<p>procedures, how to show respect, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CLCs self assess and reflect progress in each area ● Student created rubrics
<p>Action taken immediately when confusion occurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eliminates by questions or explanations ● Set conferences with individual for later so that group can proceed 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having a plan will facilitate staying on task (focused). Somewhere to document questions. ● Helps others who are absent to keep on track. ● CLCs determine a plan of action to tackle confusion (i.e. absences) ● Student mentorship
<p>All members of the PLC cooperate and develop interdependence and peer collaboration</p>	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keeps everyone accountable and models school culture; second nature to help one another and build community.
<p>Members of the PLC reflect on personal and group actions</p>	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection prior to moving to different goals or focuses. Genuine response is essential to be able to process. ● Structured to help the group get closer to the goal, and avoid derailment
<p>Members see self & others in PLC as resources not as competitors</p>	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work together, not against each other. ● Identify each member's strengths.
<p>All members of the PLC are responsible for one's own learning</p>	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If each member does their role/job, they are going to be learning ● We are more prepared to share knowledge when we assume personal responsibility for learning
<p>All members responsible for contributing to learning of others</p>	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn-keying the useful information to someone else. ● Sharing research with the group to collaborate on action items. ● Interdependence - in order for students to achieve a goal they have to rely on the knowledge and contributions of each other ● Heterogeneous groups, where the strengths of high achieving students

			can help struggling students meet the same goal
Members demonstrate respect for other PLCs	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of noise level to not distract others; use other groups as a resource for our research (cross-curricular, cross-grade level). • There needs to be communication between PLCs
All members celebrate accomplishments attending to individual and collective contributions	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine or procedure for all groups and people within a group so that everyone feels celebrated. • Acknowledge a variety of achievements or accomplishments. • CLCs are encouraged to acknowledge the accomplishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Answering questions ○ Successful group project ○ Passing grades on a difficult test/quiz ○ Celebration of writing ○ Attendance Celebration
All members of the PLC support the idea that everyone is learning	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes along with our “field” - we are consistently learning and growing; keeping a growth mindset and bringing to from our PLC to CLC. Committed and willing to learn and grow. • This can also be modeled for students in CLCs
All members respect various knowledge and skills held by individuals	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various perspectives can develop when exposed to the knowledge and skills of others • This can also be modeled for students in CLCs
Baseline data report created and shared after examination of student work	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know where we are and where we need to go. • Keep a record of accomplishments.
Using student baseline data select areas for focus, set goals, and create action plans	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with other teachers for future planning • For example, shared SGOs related to PLC goals

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CLCs are encouraged to set and track their goals based on their own data
At end of meeting group reviews meeting, notes, feedback, acknowledges how it will be used in planning next meeting	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Part our reflection procedure. Achievements in a checklist format - add action items for next meeting.
<i>Stage 3 - Identifying & Resolving Conflicts</i>			
A plan is in place for identifying and resolving conflicts	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You should discuss a plan beforehand and have a protocol for identifying conflicts and resolving them ● Follow the steps suggested by Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, and Sharp (p. 42) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reach Agreement (that there is a conflict) ○ State the Conflict ○ Identity and Select Responses (record ideas) ○ Create a Solution ○ Design and implement a plan ○ Assess Success
The plan is implemented for identifying and resolving conflicts through working on identified group conflicts or ones provided for practice	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revisit the plan once trust is developed and the group has become more comfortable with one another ● All members of the group want to participate in the plan to resolve the conflict
Members learn and use strategy for reviewing and resolving conflicts	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As members learn the conflict resolution protocol we will practice with modeling and mock scenarios (CLCs or PLCs)
Conflict resolution steps implemented with individuals or group as soon as conflicts occur	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possible meeting reflection for all members ● This is an <u>example</u> of the reflection sheet the group could use ● Will identify things that can be addressed in next meeting ● Will provide members a way to voice their ideas

When conflict occurs, discussions are held in group meetings where individual concerns are heard, using the identified problem solving strategy	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the Agenda is created, members “check-in” to express any conflict they might have, prior to the start of the PLC, so it can be included in the discussion during the PLC. • Review of reflection forms and check with members that felt conflicted to ensure that conflict is resolved • Make adjustments in the conflict resolution plan as needed. The plan may need revision as trust is developed within PLC
<i>Stage 4 - Supporting and Expanding the PLC</i>			
PLC/Substance Outcomes			
Reviews goals and plans for increasing learning and consistently implements activities and review outcomes	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in the agenda • Always checking to see if what we received is aligned to our goals. • Will help to have focused meetings, keeps all teachers accountable. • Goal Tracking/Goal-Setting by students can help them review their learning and outcomes reached throughout the year.
Collects data to show whether or not learners are reaching established outcomes (PLC has evidence that it is not just an adult feel good group)	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection type should be pre-determined during planning stages • How should we collect data? Members of PLC will decide how to collect and analyze data, and establish this procedure as part of the PLC’s operational norm. • Holding members accountable to bring data to meeting • Plan to have objective measures for data collection (standards based, rubric, etc)
Reviews data with all members of the PLC	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the data of all members is part of our data analysis procedure created by PLC Members. (See Previous Step)
Uses data relative to student			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data driven instruction.

learning to revise PLC actions	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PLC actions are fluid in response to data.
When evidence that work is not increasing outcomes (e.g. student learning) new strategies identified and implemented	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize what is working and what isn't; Be open and able to discuss and admit when changes need to take place (be prepared for conflict) ● Remain open to suggestions and changing the plan that is indicated by data ● Members work together to determine which changes should be made
Population that is progressing and the population that is not progressing are identified and PLC figures out what to do differently	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through data analysis the groups will be identified and PLC members will work together to make adjustments to fit student needs. ● Subgroups have fluidity depending on learner needs and success
PLC/Culture			
Group acknowledges the change from the establishment of the PLC to its expansion and maintenance - Asks what have we become as a group and as individuals?		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a finality to this. If it were to be included it should be the end of the PLC, not day to day. ● Reflection and closure at the end of the PLC is more important
Refines initial goals and plans for PLC... Identifies and implements activities for continuing progress and work of PLC (rules, procedures, norms used by PLC members)	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be open to make changes within the PLC during a learning cycle ● Once the initial goal is met, a new plan should be prepared; make adjusts to rules, procedures, and norms as needed
Includes activities, regularly, that increase members knowledge and respect of each other	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher-led professional development sessions; sharing ideas; highlight teacher strengths ● Gives the group an "expert" to go to for questions ● (PLCs or CLCs) Divide learning among the group and come back together to share new information (i.e. Socratic Seminar, Jigsaw, Philosophical Chairs, etc.)
Periodically uses language from		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language does not guarantee goal

expectations			<p>achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations are reviewed in the agenda, and in preparation for the PLC meeting, so because it is mentioned in many other components of the PLC procedures, we do not need to explicitly make it a point to use the language from expectations when it will be used periodically.
Reviews evidence about progress in maintaining or improving group's PLC/culture	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence and progress is included in the reflection at the end of each PLC • Group should determine whether progress has been achieved and goal(s) are met
Creates and implements plan that results in group members being able to explain what the PLC believes that drives their work		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If all steps of the plan have been followed by all members of the PLC, then the PLC will easily be able to explain what drives their work • It doesn't need to be an additional step
<p>Asks "Why are we seeing this happening?" by monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actions • beliefs • activities 	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in the reflective practices of the group (PLCs or CLCs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion in the meeting ○ Written reflection/survey ○ Analysis of Data
Attention is given to continued growth of PLC and individuals	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the PLC have the opportunity to share their growth/new knowledge • Members assume the responsibility for other members' learning and professional growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Making suggestions ○ Sharing progress ○ Documenting success/failures ○ Turn-keying strategies that work ○ Collaborative Research
<i>Stage 5 - Transitions or Closure</i>			
Group activities used to incorporate new members move group to New Beginnings Stage	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help new members feel like part of the group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team Building Activities

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce roles/norms ○ Give new member a summary of what the group has completed ○ Be open to suggestions from the new member ○ Reference new member's strengths and what they bring to the group; share strengths of the other group members with the new member ○ Show the new member their voice matters ● When a new student joins the class, encourage CLC to accept/explain rather than just modeling
Activities used to help the group move forward when a member leaves	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The group should distribute tasks/roles to make up for the loss of a member ● All remaining group members may need to improve skills that were lost by the member that left; members teaching members ● CLC will reflect on what skills were lost and how other members will accommodate for the change in dynamics (ex. Writing Partners, CLC Roles, etc.) ● Facilitate continuation of the PLC ● Review team goals
Activities for including everyone when new projects, goals, and expectations emerge	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beginning a new PLC cycle should restart the group's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team Building Activity: reconnect with group members ○ Brainstorming: "What does this issue mean to you?" ○ Goals: Determine what is important to work on next ○ Planning: Team members should agree on the steps to achieve the new goal; decide when to shift roles

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Norms: What worked and what didn't in the previous cycle? ○ Roles: Making an even distribution of responsibility and creating the opportunity to shift roles
Uses PLC rubric to regularly collect data about PLC and uses for discussions in PLC and for creating plan for working through transitions	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share the rubric and refer to it regularly for guidance through each step of the PLC process ● Determining which steps the group has completed and whether there are steps missing/yet to complete

Conclusion

Our Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric highlights the most important elements and steps for building a successful Professional Learning Community (PLC). Each stage of the group development process is “critical to creating successful PLCs” (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 20). In addition, the understanding and practice of building strong PLC culture reflects our desire to create strong Classroom Learning Communities (CLCs). By following the steps of this plan, we can assist teachers in our own schools in creating and modeling the process and requirements for strong, productive group work so students can build a learning culture of their own within their classroom.

One strength of our plan is that we highlight the value of all PLC members sharing a voice and working through the plan together as a team. We have modeled this by working collaboratively through each element of the rubric to ensure that all members of our group have shared an equal voice. In order for PLCs and CLCs to be successful and productive, members must have mutual trust and respect for one another and the learning process. This begins with

team building activities, so that members can get to know each other in order to begin building a strong bond. Once members are able to trust each other, substantial learning can take place. Creating a strong group culture does not happen overnight. PLCs must also consider the strengths and weaknesses of their school's culture to help "realize what aspects will support the creation of PLCs and need to be eliminated" (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 24). Our plan recognizes the steps of building a strong team.

Another strength of our plan is the emphasis on data collection and group collaboration in determining whether a goal is reached. This occurs when "members begin to monitor their progress by asking questions about the meaning of planned activities and their results" (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 67). The plan recognizes that group members must be open and able to discuss and admit when changes need to take place. Our plan focuses on the need for concrete evidence that the plan is successful; otherwise, the group will need to reevaluate the plan and determine which steps need to be repeated in order for the group to reach their goal.

While our rubric identifies clear steps for resolving conflicts, the plan lacks detailed strategies for the group to avoid future conflict. We know through course readings that trust is required for a PLC or CLC to be successful. "As trust develops, conflicts may actually appear more frequently because the members of the PLC trust each other and are more comfortable stating their ideas and challenging their colleagues" (Putnam, et al., 2020, p. 41). It's imperative to establish clear rules and norms for facing conflict in order to avoid diminishing the team's future productivity. As a group, we discussed that this depends very much on the PLC and school culture and how individual members of the PLC interact with each other.

Another weakness of the rubric is the absence of a clear plan for continuing professional learning when a PLC goal is not achieved. Once the group has determined that their plan was

unsuccessful, the next steps should be clearly outlined in order to keep the group on track and avoid feelings of failure or blame cast upon group members. We must remember to return to Domain III of the “Teacher Leader Model Standards” to help support our colleagues and provide them with professional development opportunities. A strong teacher leader in a PLC “uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting, and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning” (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, n.d., p. 16). As teacher leaders, we should prepare ourselves for this important step by becoming acquainted with local professional development resources and online platforms offered and encouraged for use by our individual school districts. We can also become certified in district approved platforms; we will be ready to train colleagues and share professional development opportunities in the event that our PLCs are unsuccessful.

Furthermore, this plan has made us consider opportunities to improve school culture. Improving school culture involves a shift in the attitudes inside the school. School culture can thus be viewed as a reflection of the norms, beliefs and traditions of the school staff and students. CLCs are therefore directly influenced by the culture of the school. Our plan will support teachers to take initiative in their classrooms with a focus of improving their CLCs.

Nonetheless, our plan can encounter threats to its implementation. We foresee time as a possible threat to the plan’s implementation. Inclusion of PLC time in staff’s schedule requires administration approval and support for the plan. Gaining administrative support by focusing on the positive effects that PLCs can have on improved learning is one way to work through this challenge. Our text states, “administrators with whom we worked became leaders and supporters of improved student achievement” (Putnam, et al., 2020, p.13). If administration does not take an active role in creating time for PLCs, teacher leaders should initiate change in their schedules to

accommodate PLC time. Having a shared vision of improving student achievement requires a commitment to making long lasting changes.

Another threat to the plan is unforeseen circumstances such as changes to instruction models, such as those necessary due to COVID 19. Our Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric can facilitate implementation of a structured PLC that addresses significant needs as those that may be needed due to unforeseen events.

In the face of adversity, PLCs are worthwhile to continue as they can support educators to remain motivated and focused when coping with unforeseen events. PLC results include a “higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students” (Putnam, et al., 2020, p.11). Therefore continuation of PLCs even during unforeseen circumstances can help teachers to transition their teaching to meet the demands or changes necessary to become more effective in their teaching. PLCs are also an opportunity for professional reflective dialogue. Carpenter and Munshower urged the importance of reflective dialogue, “those conversations that encourage teachers to discuss their teaching practices and collaborate on how these practices can be improved. Professional reflection leads to extensive and continuing conversation among teachers about curriculum, instruction and student development” (2020, p.78). PLCs are an opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue with others instead of coping in isolation. Although PLCs face the threat of non-continuance during unforeseen events, the continuation of PLCs will result in the reflective dialogue that is needed to cope with unforeseen events and provide support for reactive educational practices that may be put in place.

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f. Sickler_Assignment 1_EDTC33585 - Internet in the Classroom

Connecting the Dots: Taxonomies and Frameworks

Word Web: http://go.bubbl.us/aef64a/e5d8?/Sickler_Assignment1

Reflection

As a result of developing my word web, I came to the conclusion that the constructivist theories, as well as the TTIPP model, are all student driven. The learner is the center of the program. Gardner and the TTIPP models specifically emphasize that all students learn in different ways and provide outlets for students to be able to approach whatever material they should next encounter. Vygotsky and Bandura stress the importance of modeling and providing students with the right amount of scaffolding and assistance to be successful with whatever tools they are given and for whatever situation they are in. While I sincerely hope I have analyzed the proper materials for this assignment, I am intrigued at the connection between psychology and technology and the emphasis on how students learn and process information to therefore process and apply that knowledge through the use of technology. This assignment presented an interesting comparison of perspectives that opened my eyes to a new understanding of student behaviors.

g. Sickler_Assignment1_SPED08540 - Technology for Students with Special Needs

SPED08540 - Technology for Students with Special Needs
Assignment 1– IEP Review Form

IEP 1

Student's Initials (no full names) E.W.		Age: 13
Student's Classification		Specific Learning Disability Grade/Placement: 8
Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)		
Strengths	<p>Multi-sensory reading class ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong sight-sound symbol production ● greatly improved reading and spelling of sounds and closed syllable ● vowel-consonant-silent e and open syllable words. <p>Social Studies and Science - inclusion ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● conscientious worker ● positive attitude ● ask questions when needed ● always willing to lend a helping hand <p>English-Language Arts - inclusion ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to analyze challenging material ● Asks questions when in need of assistance ● Participates in class <p>Math - inclusion ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Motivated to participate in class discussions and activities ● Works well in collaborative learning groups and independently ● Self-advocates for assistance when needed ● Response well to praise and encouragement ● Polite and respectful to teachers and peers ● Knows basic math operations and facts ● Motivated to learn new concepts ● Motivated to succeed ● Prepared for class 	
Challenges	<p>Multisensory reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● needs to continue applying syllable division rules, retain and apply spelling patterns and develop fluency in both reading and spelling. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She needs to advocate for herself by asking for additional time as needed, especially when creating longer writing tasks. • She also continues to need additional checks for understanding by restating what she needs to do when beginning assignments. <p>Social Studies and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • display more confidence in her ability to be successful <p>English-Language Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cite evidence from the text that will support the inference. • Be able to determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a grade-level text. • Capitalize all proper nouns. <p>Math</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work before handing in assignments • Maintain focus in class particularly during independent and group task • Review work before handing in assignments • Hand in assignments on time • Improve study skills <p>Social/Emotional/Behavioral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce anxiety
Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in Scouts • Art and graphic design • Comics and manga
Goals and Supports	
Summary of that can be addressed in you classroom: (List at least 2 goals and objectives)	<p>Goal: When given a writing assignment, EW will use the writing processes of planning and revising in assessing if audience and purpose have been adequately addressed utilizing a writing rubric to evaluate and quantify the planning and revision processes with audience and purpose as the focus.</p> <p>Criteria: 80% success</p> <p>Standard(s): NJSLA.W4 and NJSLA.W5</p>

	<p>Goal: When presented with narrative and/or informational text from EW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, EW will cite 5 examples of textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly.</p> <p>Criteria: 90% success</p> <p>Standard(s): NJSLSA.R1</p>
Accommodations (these could include: graphic organizers; AT, such as use of keyboard, laptop, tablet; peer tutoring; extra time on assignments and/or tests)	<p>General and Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time to complete tasks/long-term projects with adjusted due dates • Allow extra time for task completion • Frequently check for understanding • Modify pace of instruction to allow additional processing time • Allow for repetition and/or clarification of directions, as needed • Reinforce visual directions with verbal cues • Directions repeated, clarified or reworded • Additional time to complete classroom tests/quizzes • Preferential seating • Provide positive reinforcement • Use graphic organizers • Include brainstorming as a pre-writing activity • Breakdown tasks into manageable units • Students should be allowed to take a break when she becomes overwhelmed. <p>General Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach of new vocabulary
Modifications (these are actual program requirement changes such as: test exemptions, course exemptions and / or course substitutions, reduced schedule/day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Considered but not applicable"
Related Services (these could include: speech, counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and / or special transportation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisensory reading course in place of an elective class

Least Restrictive Environment and associated supports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW will be in general education classes 80% of the time with an inclusion teacher for support.
Other Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW's parents have considered pursuing counseling outside of school to assist EW.

IEP 2

Student's Initials (no full names)	P.W.	Age: 13
Student's Classification	Other Health Impaired (ADHD) Grade/Placement: 8	
Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)		
Strengths	<p>English-Language Arts - inclusion ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to analyze challenging material. • Asks questions when needs assistance. • Participates in class. <p>Math - inclusion ('20-'21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-advocates for assistance when needed • Prepared for class • Response well to praise and encouragement • Polite and respectful to teachers and peers • Motivated to learn new concepts • Motivated to succeed • Knows basic math operations and facts • Motivated to participate in class discussions and activities • Works well in collaborative learning groups and independently 	
Challenges	<p>English-Language Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cite evidence from the text that will support the inference. • Be able to determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a grade-level text. • Capitalize all proper nouns. 	

	<p>Math</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handing in assignments on time • Maintaining focus in class particularly during independent and group task
Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching the military, WWII, and airplanes. • Playing Roblox with friends • Cats - playing with pet cats and looking at cat videos on Youtube
Goals and Supports	
Summary of that can be addressed in you classroom: (List at least 2 goals and objectives)	<p>Goal: When presented with narrative and/or informational text from PW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, PW will cite 5 examples of textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly.</p> <p>Criteria: 90% success</p> <p>Standard(s): NJSLSA.R1</p> <p>Goal: When presented with narrative and/or informational text from PW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, PW will state the meanings of 5 words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.</p> <p>Criteria: 90% success</p> <p>Standard(s): NJSLSA.R4 and NJSLSA.L4</p>
Accommodations (these could include: graphic organizers; AT, such as use of keyboard, laptop, tablet; peer tutoring; extra time on assignments and/or tests)	<p>General and Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow extra time for task completion • Allow for repetition and/or clarification of directions, as needed • Directions repeated, clarified or reworded • Preferential seating • Refocusing and redirection • Provide short breaks when refocusing is needed • Modify pace of instruction to allow additional processing time • Stand in proximity to student to focus attention • Use study carrel • Modified tests/quizzes • Reteach materials, when needed

Modifications (these are actual program requirement changes such as: test exemptions, course exemptions and / or course substitutions, reduced schedule/day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Considered but not applicable”
Related Services (these could include: speech, counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and / or special transportation)	<p>General Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PW may have access to a chromebook to complete long term assignments that require writing more than one paragraph.
Least Restrictive Environment and associated supports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PW will be in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day.
Other Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PW’s parents have noted that he works well with technology and felt confident during remote learning because he could adjust the pace of work and task completion. They also noted that PW felt less distracted at home versus in the traditional setting.

After reviewing the two IEPs, which student do you believe would benefit more for an assistive technology intervention? Why?

After comparing the two IEPs of my students from last year, I can conclude that PW would benefit more from an assistive technology intervention. As a student learning with ADHD, management of time, materials, and attention can be difficult for him. I feel that there are more tools available that could assist PW in focusing and succeeding to the best of his ability. PW would benefit from access to audiobook versions of the texts read in class. They would allow him to experience the text at his own pace. He would be able to stop and start as he needs and would allow him to modify his own pace to adjust for processing time. The use of graphic organizers, guided notes, and task lists can also be assets in helping PW to remain focused and on task, as well as organize his time throughout the block period. PW could benefit from utilizing a proofreading program, such as Grammarly, to focus on capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure for graded assignments. Lastly, although listed as a supplemental service, PW would benefit greatly from completing all tasks using a computer, rather than just long, handwritten assignments. In comparison to PW, EW receives many versions of assistive technology in her multisensory reading course. These interventions include graphic organizers,

task lists, and audiobooks. While she may benefit from proofreading programs such as Grammarly, her achievement level signifies that academically, she is capable of achieving the objectives without support for the 90% success criteria. For these reasons, I feel that an assistive technology intervention would benefit PW.

h. Sickler_Assignment1p1_METL50514 - Agency in Teacher Leadership

Low Engagement/Involvement from Low-Income Families

Introduction

In my hometown of Hamilton, NJ, the poverty rate in my hometown doubled from 2000 to 2020, and the economic struggles of families outside of the classroom have begun to impact student success within it. This acknowledgement led me to my problem of practice. My problem of practice is centered around finding ways to increase involvement of the low-income families in my area and to gauge its impact on student achievement levels both daily as well as during standardized assessments. I feel there is a correlation between families taking time to engage with the school community and students' long term success rates. As a teacher leader in my school, my research will help provide me with concrete evidence, as well as data, to support the notion that addressing the involvement of this subgroup will increase student achievement. My focus on this topic has guided me to developing the following inquiry questions to address my problem of practice:

1. How does an increase of low-income parent and family engagement at school functions increase student achievement on standardized testing?
2. How does student attendance compare between middle class and low-income families in regards to parental and familial involvement with the school?
3. How can remote access to school increase parent and family engagement for low-income families?

Research

The research conducted in METL50513 concluded that there isn't a direct correlation between increased parental involvement and increased student achievement. However, before delving into that debate, it was essential to establish the difference between engagement and involvement. Through my previous research, the definition that I find encompasses the

connection between home life and school life is that of El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal. El Nokali et al. view the home and school contexts or layers are characterized as “autonomous microsystems, and parent involvement is conceptualized as a mesosystem, which is made up of interactions between key microsystems.” Although each system would function to independently impact a student, together the home and school contexts build the necessary support for student success (2010).

As I continued my research, I wanted to explore parent engagement further, investigating how engagement changes in the subgroup of low-income households and how that could change. Posey-Maddox’s research regarding race, class and the norms of parental engagement in city public schools highlighted an interesting development when comparing the middle class to the low-income households within my focus subgroup. Through research studies with PTO’s in Woodbury, California, it was found that race- and class- based patterns shaped how parents engaged with schools. The study concluded that

African American parents and low-income and working-class parents were more likely to volunteer in their child’s class or attend child-related meetings and events such as performances or classroom meetings. White middle- and upper-middle-class parents were disproportionately represented in MPTO meetings and more likely to engage at the school and district level (2013).

It was then that I discovered a crucial misstep in my previous research. While having determined what parent involvement vs. parent engagement is, I hadn’t considered what exactly I wanted the parent interaction to look like in order to determine its connection with student achievement. Moving forward, I will need to specify what “my” engagement looks like, whether it be attendance at school academic based functions, attendance at school non-academic based functions, or simply participation of any kind in the school PTO.

As I had concluded in my METL50513 assignments 4 and 5, I need to find the link to

academic achievement in regards to my problem of practice. If I were to focus solely on my subgroup, low-income families, I can certainly identify a bell curve of achievement.

Concurrently, Lam's research collected indicated that "children in families with incomes less than one-half of the poverty line were found to score between 6 and 13 points lower on the various standardized tests" (2014). Ultimately, living below the poverty threshold added additional stressors, and as these stressors increase, families face difficulties in finding the monetary resources to address what impacts the students. Add parenting styles as well as parental expectations, Gam illustrated, and students will inevitably face struggles in meeting academic expectations. The article also addressed the effects of low expectations placed on students from parents, teachers, and the students themselves. While this mindset didn't yield quantitative data, I found it important to consider student motivation and the student perspective when conducting my research. If applicable, I would like to consider incorporating student voice to document the positive and negative effects of parental engagement on their academic endeavors.

In reviewing my inquiry questions, I wanted to link the ideas of student attendance and truancy to my problem of practice, as student attendance also affects all levels of student achievement. Set in England, Jerims and Sims's research regarding why so few low- and middle-class students attend grammar school emphasized early on that "not enough low- and middle-income children gain entry to grammar schools in the first place. Just 3% of pupils educated in a grammar school in England are eligible for free school meals, despite accounting for 13% of the pupil population" (2019). This connects to a discrepancy that I had found while searching for data and research within my building. As it stands, during a "normal" year, my school consists of approximately 50% of the student body qualifying for free and reduced lunch. It was brought to

my attention this year, and verified by research, that the process of gaining free and reduced lunch status is much more conducive to years prior. In fact, as stated on the NJDOE Verification Guideline for School Meals, it quite clearly states, “Not all applications are verified. USDA has established that the standard sample size is three percent (3%) of the total approved free and reduced price paper applications on file as of October 1st, selected from error prone applications” (2016). This leads me to conclude that there may be many who have received this status that are not as in need or as “low income” as others in our building. Therefore, utilizing free and reduced lunch status as an indicator of low-income status can very easily yield skewed results. This has brought me back to the drawing board to find more concrete determining factors for my subgroups that I, as a teacher, can access and assess.

Conclusion

I feel it goes without saying that I have my work cut out for me as I endeavor to address a growing subgroup and measure how engagement during a global pandemic affects student achievement in the hybrid learning setting. As I had concluded in previous assignments, I feel that this problem of practice and inquiry project, though challenging, will yield information that will impact myself and students for years to come. As teachers, the better the understanding we have on our students, the better we can teach them and guide them to success. Learning more about the low-income families in my community will allow me to focus on developing strategies to provide these families with the proper scaffolding to contribute to student achievement. As I have said in the past, if I can evoke a positive change for just one student, the work will have been well worth it.

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i. Sickler_Assignment1p2_METL50514 - Agency in Teacher Leadership

Problem of Practice: Approaching the Data

My inquiry project design follows the first mentioned in this week's lecture: finding a better understanding for a growing problem to make more informed decisions for my students. While the latter design provides structure and introduces the use of formal formative and summative assessments as data points for evidence of effectiveness, this inquiry project will take a different approach to concrete, quantitative data regarding the student population in my school. Calfee and Masuka's research into classroom assessment as inquiry concluded, "Interpretation builds on two criteria: consistency of the evidence and strength of the argument" (1997, p.91). When researchers leave data up to interpretation, it can be easily manipulated to prove one's argument incorrect or can mislead to an incorrect conclusion. Calfee and Masuka also address the issue of reliability and validity. For data to be considered in a research study such as this, the sources should be deemed reputable, the data supported and addressing the question of primary concern, and the evidence from the source dependable. For this inquiry project, all data will be derived from school-based sources, including but not limited to certified staff members, administrators, the district data storage system, and records kept from previous years of school functions.

Understanding of the Subgroup

For my inquiry project, my data will need to be representative of my student body as a whole. To achieve such end, I will need to rely on my resources in the Guidance office as well as with administration to gather a collection of data points regarding our student body. To begin developing my subgroup of students, I will need to collect data regarding the entire student body population. To do so, I will interview one of our three guidance counselors. I will first request a breakdown of the entire student body by grade level, gender, demographic, IEP/504 status, LEP status, "feeder" school (the students' home elementary schools), and status regarding free and

reduced lunch. This information is accessible in our PowerSchool information system for counselors and administrators. All of the requested data above is concrete and had been derived from student records, leaving no room for interpretation.

Part of my inquiry project addresses increases in student achievement. Therefore, I will need to access standardized testing data to serve as my baseline and benchmark data to gage any improvement or decline in student achievement. NJSLA, iReady Diagnostic, and ImagineMath Diagnostic data are all accessible through our LinkIt data storage system. As a member of the school's data team, I have access to these student records. I intend on running a report for each grade respectively, focusing specifically on the previous year's NJSLA (or last recorded state test), as well as the most recent sets of department benchmark data. Based on each grade level and accompanying scoring guide, I will determine a range of high, medium, and low scoring for the three types of assessments. As I move forward in my research, this will allow me to identify changes in the students' standardized achievement level as a result of an increase or decrease of parent involvement and engagement with the school. Finally, I will need to address student attendance and truancy. By utilizing the counselor, I can gain access to students' current and previous attendance records. This will serve as another data point in developing the image of the whole student in my subgroup population.

Involvement vs. Engagement

As stated in part 1 of my inquiry project, "involvement" and "engagement" are not synonymous, and to find success in identifying how a strong connection between home and school have an effect, whether positive or negative, on a student's academic performance on standardized assessments. For the purpose of this inquiry study, "involvement" will be defined as connecting with the school and supporting the school to assist the student. This can include

responding to teacher emails and phone calls focusing on the student. “Engagement” will be defined as working with the school to develop a relationship to collaboratively work on ways of improving student achievement. Simply stating, where involvement is working for the school to help the student, engagement is working with the school. Therefore, for the sake of this inquiry project, I will be focusing on parental engagement in terms of attendance and participation at various school events and functions.

Before delving any further, I will need to clarify that there are three types of activities being utilized to determine parental engagement: academic school activities, non-academic school activities, and community activities. Examples of academic school activities include art, band, and choral exhibitions, the Fall Saturday Resource Fair, and the upcoming April Virtual Resource Fair. These activities are rooted in academic work or have a direct correlation to the improvement of academic work. Non-academic school activities can include the spring musical and the college and career fair. Community activities represent those opened to the entire Hamilton area to support the community in one way or another. Examples of these include the Harlem Wizards basketball night, the Black History Month Family Night, and the Hispanic Heritage Festival.

As a teacher, I have access to the school’s current Google calendar as well as that of previous years. I will need to utilize the calendar to determine how many of each type of school function existed in the previous school year. To take this further, I will access one of my administrators for copies of the sign-in sheets from the previous year’s activities. This will provide me with data as to who is attending each event. These sign-in sheets provide a parent/guardian name as well as a student, so I can determine how many students from my

identified subgroup had parents or guardians the previous year that had engaged with the school and had attended any after school activities.

A final area in which I can tap into parental involvement and engagement would be to connect with our school's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). With the assistance of the president and/or vice president, I can confirm, based on my subgroup, parental involvement by determining membership of those in my subgroup. Additionally, I can confirm parental engagement by activity records from the PTO regarding volunteerism at events such as the school dance and attendance at PTO monthly meetings.

I would like to incorporate parent voice into this inquiry project, so, with the approval of my administration and anyone further, if necessary, I would like to administer a Google Form survey to parents and families to gain qualitative data regarding what makes someone want to engage with their child's school, what events they had attended in the past, and what would deter them from participating in a school function.

Moving Forward

The data provided from the sources above will allow me to draw conclusions between parental engagement and student achievement. I will have quantitative data regarding student achievement levels in both math and ELA evaluated multiple times throughout the school year as well as attendance records to determine truancy. Concurrently, I will look at the "parent records" available to see if there are any correlations in changes to student scores as changes, if any, occurred with the parent's connection to the school. I feel parent voice and testimonial is important in determining the continued path of this inquiry project, so the collection of parent and guardian opinions regarding engaging in school functions will be an important qualitative piece of data. This data, paired with the copious amounts of data addressed previously, will

hopefully help me paint a picture of how and why a change in the participation of low-income families can positively or negatively affect the academic achievement of the student.

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Low Engagement/Involvement from Low-Income Families

Introduction

Driven by a desire to better my school and community, I embarked on my inquiry journey with the hopes of bringing light to a growing issue in my town of Hamilton in Mercer County. In my hometown, as I have shared before, the poverty rate has doubled from 2000 to 2020, and the economic struggles of families outside of the classroom have begun to impact student success within it. Ultimately, I wanted to do something about this, and to be able to enact change, I knew I needed to start with evidence and data. It was from this realization that my problem of practice was born and my inquiry questions developed. My focus on this topic has guided me to the following questions to address my problem of practice:

1. How does an increase of low-income parent and family engagement at school functions increase student achievement on standardized testing?
2. How does student attendance compare between middle class and low-income families in regards to parental and familial involvement with the school?
3. How can remote access to school increase parent and family engagement for low-income families?

This study, particularly during a global pandemic, did not provide any assistance in finding the information I was determined existed and would support my goals of inevitably helping to foster stronger connections between schools and lower-income areas of my community. That being said, I had accepted the challenge of collecting any and all information relating to these neglected areas of my community in regards to school engagement and ways in which my school in particular has begun the process of addressing the inequities present.

Collection of Data

As of April of 2021, my school consisted of approximately 38% of students identifying as Hispanic, 35% identifying as white, 18% identifying as African American, 5% identifying as

multicultural, 3.5% identifying as Asian, and the remaining percentage representing other cultures or representing a student not identifying with one particular background. The school contains 478 male students and 456 female students (“Monroe” 2021). The majority of students that represented what subjectively could be identified as “low income” primarily attended one of the six “feeder” elementary schools, narrowing the target area to select neighborhoods in our 40-sq.mile town. To protect the anonymity of these students, I was limited in my ability to collect specific data regarding these schools and students to develop a concrete subgroup. As of March 7, 2021, approximately 63% of the student body of my school identified as a student of color, and of that population, 70% were enrolled in our free-and-reduced lunch program (“Monroe” 2021). As stated on the NJDOE Verification Guideline for School Meals, it quite clearly states, “Not all applications are verified. USDA has established that the standard sample size is three percent (3%) of the total approved free and reduced price paper applications on file as of October 1st, selected from error prone applications” (2016). Therefore, the identification of receiving free and reduced lunch would not yield a true collection of students to develop the subgroup that I had intended.

My research required me to review all school events over the past three years to categorize them in terms of levels of engagement. To do so, I reviewed the school calendar to determine the number and types of events provided over the last three years. During the 2018-2019 school year, engagement activities were offered in the forms of seven academic school activities, eight non-academic school activities, and eight community-based activities. All activities took place during weeknights between the hours of 5:00 and 9:00PM (“Grice middle school” n.d.). From September of 2019 to March of 2020, four academic school activities were offered, nine non-academic school activities were offered, and seven community-based activities

were offered (“Grice middle school” n.d.). These all occurred prior to the COVID-19 shutdown of public schools in the area for the remainder of the academic year and were offered on week nights as well as Saturday mornings. As of April of 2021, two academic school activities, one non-academic school activity, and one community-based activity have been offered and promoted (“Grice middle school” n.d.).

Evaluation and Refocusing: How We are Meeting the Needs

One may view the disjointed research above and consider this inquiry a failure, but I would disagree. While my access to concrete statistics and student data was limited, I was afforded the opportunity to view my research from a different angle. How was my school working toward increasing parent engagement? What steps have been taken thus far to establish relationships, and how are those relationships being fostered? What actions are being taken to solidify a connection with the most needy of areas in the community?

These inquiry questions, paired with an interview of Ms. Jessica Belmont, counselor, aided me in attaining a new understanding of my school’s role in establishing and maintaining relationships with our community. From 2019-2021, the school community placed heavy emphasis on parental engagement to address school-wide initiatives such as minimizing chronic absenteeism (“Belmont” 2021). These activities included hiring two spanish-speaking secretaries in the main office, hiring 1.5 new ESL teachers (.5 representing a part time teacher gaining a full time position), offering Sheltered Instruction experience to all teachers and staff, utilizing technology programs that can be translated into multiple languages, and providing a wellness survey to families by way of social media, the school website, and a Robo-call to the community. Barriers were beginning to fall that stood between the school and families, and as access increased, communication ultimately followed.

It's imperative to note, when comparing what has been done to what could be done to close the engagement gap, that the majority of the past and current engagement initiatives and activities are not items noted on the school calendar but rather weekly occurrences built into the culture of the school. Beyond the pandemic restrictions, the school practices an open door policy to encourage parental involvement and engagement. As Ms. Belmont astutely identified, "During a normal, virus-free year, no one gets turned away. They can always access someone to speak to and have their concerns heard" ("Belmont" 2021). To modify this action during the pandemic, teachers, counselors, and administrators alike utilize multiple means of communication to access families and make communications at varied times of day to accommodate schedules. Concurrently, family connections are still being fostered by way of the home visit program. Enacted during the 2017-2018 school year and adapted for the current setting, teachers and counselors continue to make and strengthen connections with students and families through phone calls, Google Meets, and physical visitations to ensure all needs are met and all concerns are heard.

Student and staff designed events such as the World Fair, Hispanic Heritage Night, and Black History Month Celebration Night to honor community culture while inviting parents and families to engage with student products and performances while providing dinner and to-go containers. Beginning in March of 2020, food distribution has been established at seven locations throughout the district to provide a week's worth of food to families in need with no questions asked. Even while dancing between the remote and hybrid schedules, Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives continued to support our community, and a holiday assistance drive, in partnership with The College of New Jersey, provided families with clothing, toys, and necessary supplies for the holiday season.

A great emphasis has been placed on giving whatever can be given to our community, and no event represents this more than the Virtual Community Resource Fair, an event which took place on a Saturday morning this month. With information disseminated on social media and with a time provided outside of traditional work hours, teachers and staff assembled support programs and resources in the areas of legal aid, financial support, mental health, counseling, academic success, and technology, all containing bilingual presenters. Ms. Belmont, another contributing member for this event, reflected back and stated, “It was easier not to host it, but we were able to address 100% of the issues of that Saturday fair” (“Belmont” 2021). That is the underlying theme of this school and district as a whole: it may be easier to quit, but the effort is never done in vain; the impact always surpasses any challenge we may face.

Next Steps

While the list engagement activities provided is encouraging, the work on fostering and maintaining strong familial engagement to promote academic achievement is far from over. First, it is essential to consistently reflect on the fact that everything is interconnected. As with students in a classroom, there are many factors that impact the engagement level of a parent or family, and to find a solution, we need to understand the root of the problem. For example, are there transportation or communication issues that prevent the parent from attending a school function? Does the family need mental health or SEL supports in place to welcome the new partnership with the school? Does the household have a unique structure that limits accessibility (ex: a grandparent raising grandchildren with limited understanding of technology, or a parent struggling to find child supervision)? Are our families transient and frequently traveling out of the country to be with relatives? By viewing familial engagement in the same regards as we

would a student in our classrooms, we can shift our focus from fixing a broken system to creating a stronger one.

To fully strengthen our communal ties across Hamilton, a next step would be to build stronger relations with our feeder schools. While we often communicate over shared students, all six elementaries that filter to my middle school do not share common practices to address common areas of concern or goals. This can be illustrated in the way that each school, for example, addresses chronic absenteeism. School A is incredibly vigilant in contacting home, providing resources, and keeping families aware of the consequences of continued unexcused absences. School B, on the other hand, only addresses the issue once it approaches the 18-day state notice of chronic absenteeism. Having students enter from both School A and School B, my school faces the challenge of teaching our values and policies while addressing what had been done in the past to ultimately prepare our students for their inevitable transition to high school. Parents are often confused, as their “previous school” did things differently, and the transition time often takes longer than needed to begin establishing positive change. Moving forward, as schools come together in consortiums and collaborate on policies and procedures, consistency will help to address any equity issues established in the gaps between buildings. Ultimately, the partnership between members of the district will reinforce the importance of partnerships with the schools and parents alike.

Conclusion

As I had identified in a discussion board posting from earlier this semester, I had known from the beginning of my inquiry process that the challenge of my problem of practice would be difficult to solve. That being said, I do not regret my choice in addressing one of the most complex and important issues facing my school district and school in particular. I found that, as I

researched deeper and redirected after each dead end, my passion grew for finding both the root cause of the low engagement as well as how to address the engagement in a way that also encourages it. I continue to view engagement as a collaborative partnership. By continually providing outlets for parents and families to have a means to engage with the school, we are demonstrating that their partnership, rather than their reason for not engaging in the first place, is far more important to us for their wellness as well as for our school success.

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Introduction

In August of 2008, a consortium of teachers came together and began developing a set of standards that helped harness the power of leadership to positively influence student learning and school culture. The result of this effort was the Teacher Leader Model Standards, a core set of standards to address a teacher leader's role in their school settings to enact the largest amount of change and to lead their peers and students to a more enriching academic experience. The Teacher Leader Model Standards, as identified by the NEA, "are designed to stimulate dialogue among stakeholders of the teaching profession about what constitutes the knowledge, skills, and competencies that teachers need to assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and the profession" ("The Teacher Leader Model Standards," 1). Within these standards are seven distinct domains to address all areas in which teacher leaders can foster learning, growth, collaboration, and overall success.

Teacher Leader Model Standards

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

Domain I focuses on a teacher leader's understanding of adult learning in relation to how to improve instruction and positively affect student learning. In addition, this standard addresses the ways in which teacher leaders build collaboration, respect, and trust amongst colleagues to continually improve for the sake of the students. There is an emphasis placed on building relationships and rapport with staff members to improve the overall culture; however, this standard does not stop solely at collegiality. Teacher leaders use communication skills as well as grouping and facilitation skills to encourage teachers to work together to solve school-wide challenges and initiatives, to make informed decisions, and promote meaningful change in

learning environments as well as throughout the school. Teacher leaders help create inclusive environments that value the input as well as the effort of all teachers and welcomes every perspective when focusing on new challenges. In doing so, teacher leaders place value in acknowledging the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages of teachers to enhance the problem solving and communication amongst staff members. This standard embodies the mentality that “it takes a village” to change a school.

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

This domain focuses on the collection and application of data to improve teacher practice and student learning. With extensive knowledge of data analysis, teacher leaders assist colleagues in finding appropriate means to collect data and assess it to address their areas of inquiry. In leading by example, teacher leaders begin to create a culture of questioning, researching, and analyzing to best inform practices. Within this domain, teacher leaders share knowledge of analyzing data with colleagues. In many cases, teachers are able and willing to collect data but are not knowledgeable on how to read the data as well as what to do with it. Teacher leaders use opportunities such as these to bring colleagues together to explore findings from the assessment given, collaboratively determine what the results mean, and create a plan to then apply the knowledge gained from the data collection to improve instructional strategies. Additionally, teacher leaders provide scaffolding and support for colleagues as they continue to work through the data analysis process from their learning activities to improve instruction.

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

Domain III addresses the teacher leader’s role in consistently promoting continued professional growth for themselves as well as colleagues that aligns to school improvement goals. To do so, teacher leaders first collect and use data about adult learning to address the

diverse needs of colleagues. Teacher leaders determine what colleagues need to be successful and find ways to facilitate the professional learning through differentiation and collaboration. Their work doesn't end at helping the research begin. Teacher leaders continue to work in partnership with colleagues to now apply skills of data collection and analysis to professional learning and its impact on teaching and student learning. This work is done meaningfully and is continually reflected upon and revisited. For this to happen, teacher leaders work with administrators for sufficient time for colleagues to work with each other, work with data, and engage in professional learning directed toward a schoolwide goal or initiative. Throughout this process, teacher leaders provide constructive feedback to strengthen practices. In doing so, teacher leaders are enabling their colleagues to make necessary positive changes to increase the learning of students.

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

In this domain, teacher leaders transition from the professional learning and data analysis to application of teaching methods through modeling best practices. One of these practices is reflection. Teacher leaders model how to collect, analyze, and use classroom and school-based data efficiently and reflect on actions during each step of the process. They engage in dialogue with colleagues, opening classroom doors and welcoming feedback from colleagues with the intention to improve. Teacher leaders welcome others to observe instruction as well as student work to gain others' perspectives and insight on how to improve. These instructional round-style methods encourage and support colleagues in having open dialogue as well as individual and collective reflection on school-wide practices. Throughout this reflective process, the teacher leader serves as a facilitator and guide to help colleagues reach new levels of understanding of themselves and their own instructional strengths and weaknesses as well as an understanding of

how each teacher can impact the success of the school as a whole. This domain introduces the application of technology, both existing and emerging, to assist colleagues in helping students navigate how to find information, apply information, collaborate with others effectively and appropriately, and how to use technology to enhance their learning. In addition to technology, teacher leaders begin addressing how to appropriately and meaningfully address the issues of equity and social justice in the classroom setting to remove educational barriers.

Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement

This domain coincides with Domain II in focusing on data driven instruction for improvement. As the teacher leader continues to build knowledge on how to collect and apply data, there is an increase in focus on how to use multiple means of assessment to inform decisions. Teacher leaders collaborating in creating, implementing, and scoring assessments, such as grade level common assessments, to determine the strategies that are working best and ways to lessen any identifiable deficiencies. In taking on the challenges of seeing these assessments through from design to data analysis with colleagues, teacher leaders are creating a culture of trust amongst colleagues as well as objective reflection; as teachers share their findings, compare data, and work together to find solutions, the collegiality and trust increases with the realization that “we are all in this together.”

Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

Domain VI focuses on connections made between teachers, schools, and the outside communities. Teacher leaders understand that collaboration is key in education, and they continually find ways to build relationships with families, communities, and local businesses and community leaders to provide the best educational opportunities possible. Teacher leaders learn and apply their knowledge of the diversity of the school to promote positive interactions within

the school as well as out in the community. To do so, teacher leaders model how to communicate with families and stakeholders. This may be through phone calls, virtual meetings, or through applications with assistive technology to translate material into many languages. Teacher leaders understand that collaboration with families and community extends far beyond simply translating school material into three different languages. Teacher leaders understand the needs of the families and community and work with colleagues to address what the students need in order to do the best they can. These can range from personal and familial to educational. Teacher leaders consider the whole student and what can be done to provide the best instruction possible.

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

Domain VII reflects upon a teacher leader's knowledge and agency to advocate for students when developing local, state, and national educational policies. Teacher leaders are driven by the knowledge of student needs and with the goal of increasing student learning. To achieve such end, teacher leaders communicate with peers how local, state, and national policies can affect each teacher's classrooms and how they impact practices at the school level. Teacher leaders continually advocate for access to resources, including but not limited to time and financial support, for colleagues to address the professional development and practices needed to focus on school improvement goals. Teacher leaders assume the platform for themselves, their students, their colleagues, and for all teachers.

Reflection and Personal Connection

As a developing teacher leader, I find that my strengths tend to fall in the areas of Domain II and V. For the past four years, I have served on my school's data team, consisting of an ELA teacher, a math teacher, and an administrator. In close collaboration with our technology and testing staff in the district, I have spent many hours working on school platforms pulling,

organizing, and analyzing school-wide data for state assessments, district benchmark platforms, and department benchmark assessments, as well as non-academic data sources such as attendance and free and reduced lunch status. Once the team and I had collected our findings, it was our responsibility to make meaningful connections between the data and our staff. *How could this information help everyone? What can they do with this information? How does this impact student learning in x, y, and z classes?* The next step of our process was to turnkey our findings. We would present our material to our staff members and all stakeholders under the premise that we were working to reach a universal goal. In many instances, our goal was to help remove our school from being identified as a “school in need of improvement” under ESSA. This is when the dialogue began. Teachers were able to attend Edcamp-style meetings focused on their specific questions as well as data tutorials and professional development sessions. Our colleagues would frequently stop by our classrooms with questions or ask if we could review data with them to ensure they are taking away the right conclusions to inform their instruction. As I continue into the second half of my fifth year at my school, I can see that the focus on data driven instruction, collaboration, and the “all for one” mentality has greatly impacted and improved the emphasis on student learning and has increased overall student achievement.

As I continue to grow and refine my leadership skills, I feel I should continue to focus on Domains VI. As described in this week’s discussion board, I feel that this domain is not maximized in my school for all populations. Partnerships are created with our lowest achieving “feeder school” as well as with churches and programs in that community. However, as a school that receives the majority of its students from six “feeder schools,” much of our students are not benefitting from having a direct link to their communities. When, as a school, we focus solely on one demographic or one area of town, we ostracize the other students and create an impression

that connecting to their communities is not as valuable to the school. This mentality develops animosity between schools and areas of the town, much like what I had observed and experienced when growing up, and does not contribute to a unified school community or positive school culture. On a smaller scale, I feel I have missed opportunities to connect with the broad range of learners that I teach this year to strengthen collaboration with parents and guardians. While I have fostered a strong connection with many families of Hispanic descent, not addressing the other various cultural backgrounds and identities in my class limits the extent of the community relationship I can create. This is one of the most important domains in the Teacher Leader Model Standards because education is a collaborative process. We as teachers build upon the work of one another, in conjunction with strong relationships with families, to foster growth and inquiry with students. We as teachers improve through collaboration with our peers, with our students, and through self reflection. The nature of what we do is collaborative, so in placing an emphasis on strengthening community ties that do exist and creating those that do not, we are placing value in the community and welcoming a connection to ultimately help our students be successful.

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- 1. Sickler_Assignment2_METL50514 - Agency in Teacher Leadership**

“It’s Right if it’s For the Kids”

As the 2020-2021 school year slowly reaches its conclusion, I will continue to stand firmly in the belief that all students are able to learn and be successful both academically and socially with the proper support. I will continue to conduct myself with a positive attitude to establish a welcoming learning environment for all and will support all to reach their full potential. I believe in teaching to the whole child and that every aspect of his or her character contributes to his or her learning in my class and in life. I believe that all instructional decisions are right if for the benefit of the students. The students come first, and their learning is most important. What’s “right” for my students this year is fostering their voices and independent thoughts.

By the end of the school year, my students will demonstrate a transferable skill developed throughout the year. They will embody the inquiry mindset that I have fostered throughout our stories and activities surrounding how we rise from adversity. I will pass the torch to my students to guide our class through our final texts based on their inquiry as it relates to one’s response to challenges and how they overcome them. I will provide my students a platform to stand on their own with the scaffolding to know that I will not let them fail as they challenge themselves to critically think and socratically collaborate to solve problems together. They will question, challenge, and initiate research of their own as well as expand on information presented to them surrounding the essential question and theme of the year. They will steer our learning based on their questions, misconceptions, interests, and predictions.

My students’ success will be evident by their ability to lead rather than follow. Through written and verbal questioning and student-led discussions, my class will demonstrate that they have maximized their potential and have succeeded in utilizing the scaffolding throughout the

year to use their voices during literary analysis. Each student will present independent claims regarding the reading, the research, and his or her personal beliefs. As my students soar, I will facilitate the discussions, provide guidance for the research, and support their inquiry with resources to allow my students to grow their analysis voices regarding the text at hand, the essential question, and the theme. My agency will be utilized to provide what my students need to feel comfortable and confident in standing on their own, conducting research, vocalizing their beliefs, and supporting their thoughts with facts and evidence. “It’s right if it’s for the kids,” and helping my students, impacted by the news and social media of the day, establish their independent voices to be used to express their thoughts and beliefs will always be right.

Problem of Practice and Inquiry Questions

I am fortunate enough to be able to say that I grew up in the town where I currently teach. As a result of such, I have witnessed a huge economic shift in my area from the time when I sat at a desk to now when I instruct from the front of the classroom. This financial change affects all areas of our 40-square mile town of Hamilton Township in Mercer County. Our school district is composed of seventeen elementary schools from all corners of our town, as well as three middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative school. The economic changes for members of our town have trickled down to affect our schools, our students' performance, and the overall level of community and family engagement, particularly from those in low-income families.

In 2000, as I finished elementary school, the poverty rate in our town was 4.2% of the population, representing 3,600 people. In 2010, as I continued studying in community college, the poverty rate was 5.9% of the population, representing 5,200 people. In the most recent census count, the poverty rate was an all time high of 7.9%, identifying that approximately 7,000 people live below the poverty line. While this may seem like a small fraction of a very large town, I see the impact these statistics have on my students daily. I've observed a decrease in preparedness for an incoming year, lack of participation from the students, and an overall decrease in familial involvement.

My problem of practice is centered around finding ways to increase involvement of the low-income families in my area and to gauge its impact on student achievement levels both daily as well as during standardized assessments. I feel there is a correlation between families taking time to engage with the school community and students' long term success rates. This focus will allow me to gain more insight into the students in my own classroom as well as throughout our building. As a teacher leader in my school, my research will help provide me with concrete

evidence, as well as data, to support the notion that addressing the involvement of this subgroup will increase student achievement. My focus on this topic has guided me to developing the following inquiry questions to address my problem of practice:

1. How does an increase of low-income parent and family engagement at school functions increase student achievement on standardized testing?
2. How does student attendance compare between middle class and low-income families in regards to parental and familial involvement with the school?
3. How can remote access to school increase parent and family engagement for low-income families?

Addressing these questions through research and exploration will then open the door for conversations, planning, and execution of various strategies to connect with the areas of our community that need the connection the most.

Standards Connection

It can go without saying that this topic has become a passion of mine as I have redeveloped my roots in my town and school community over the past five years. However, my emotions aside, I see this topic as a leadership opportunity to strengthen community ties with our school for the benefit of our students. Domain VI of the Teacher Leader Model Standards directly connects to improving community outreach and collaboration with families. Members of the community can have a significant impact on student learning. As a teacher leader, it is our responsibility to bridge the gap, no matter how challenging, between all stakeholders in our students' education to establish the most conducive learning environment and experiences. Teacher leaders assume the tasks of using "knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in the school community to promote effective

interactions among colleagues, families, and the larger community.” Additionally, teacher leaders model and teach how to communicate and collaborate with families and “other stakeholders focused on attaining equitable achievement for students of all backgrounds and circumstances.” Ultimately, a strong partnership between teacher leaders and communities provides a true understanding of the diverse backgrounds, both cultural and educational, as well as the diverse needs of students and families in the community.

My teaching philosophy has always thrived on the understanding that “it takes a village to educate a student,” and this statement holds true for all socioeconomic areas of our town. To be able to deliver the most cohesive and enriching learning experiences to my students, I need to meet them where they are. My focus on increasing engagement for low-income families will provide me with necessary background knowledge of my students as well as my community to build relationships within my classroom. Additionally, this knowledge will allow me to foster a partnership between our school and community to increase engagement and ultimately enhance the learning experiences and achievement levels of all students in the building.

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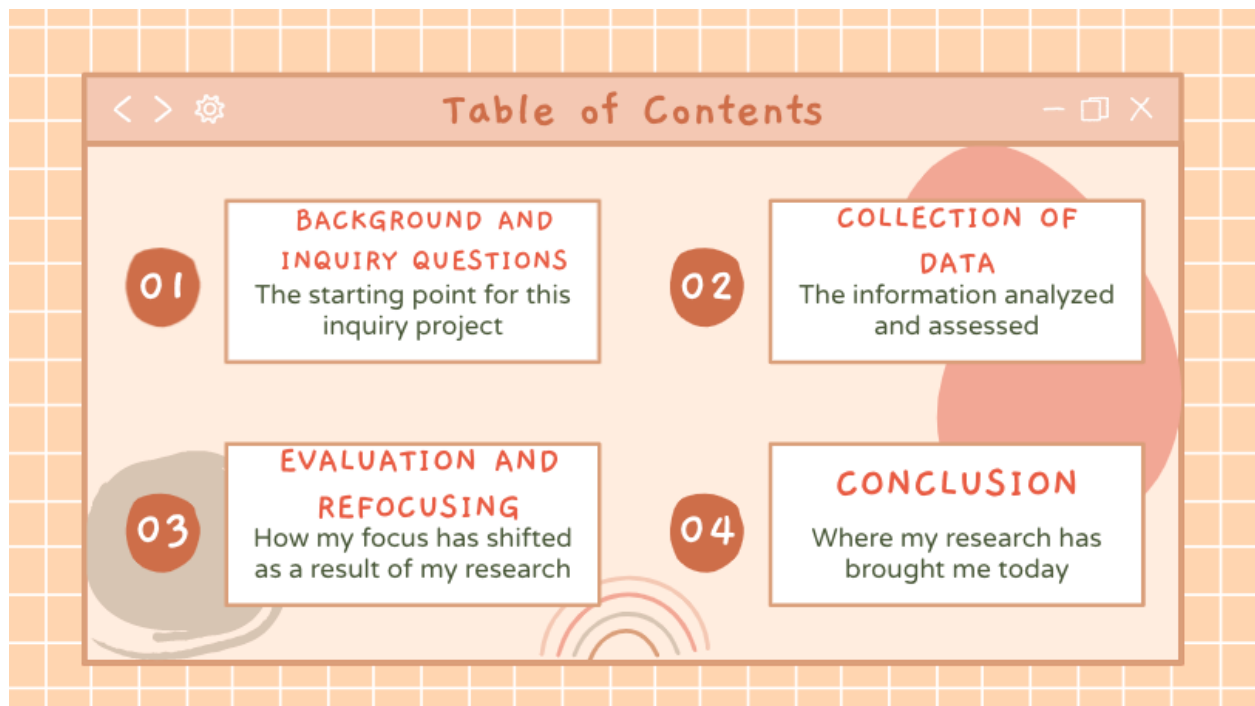
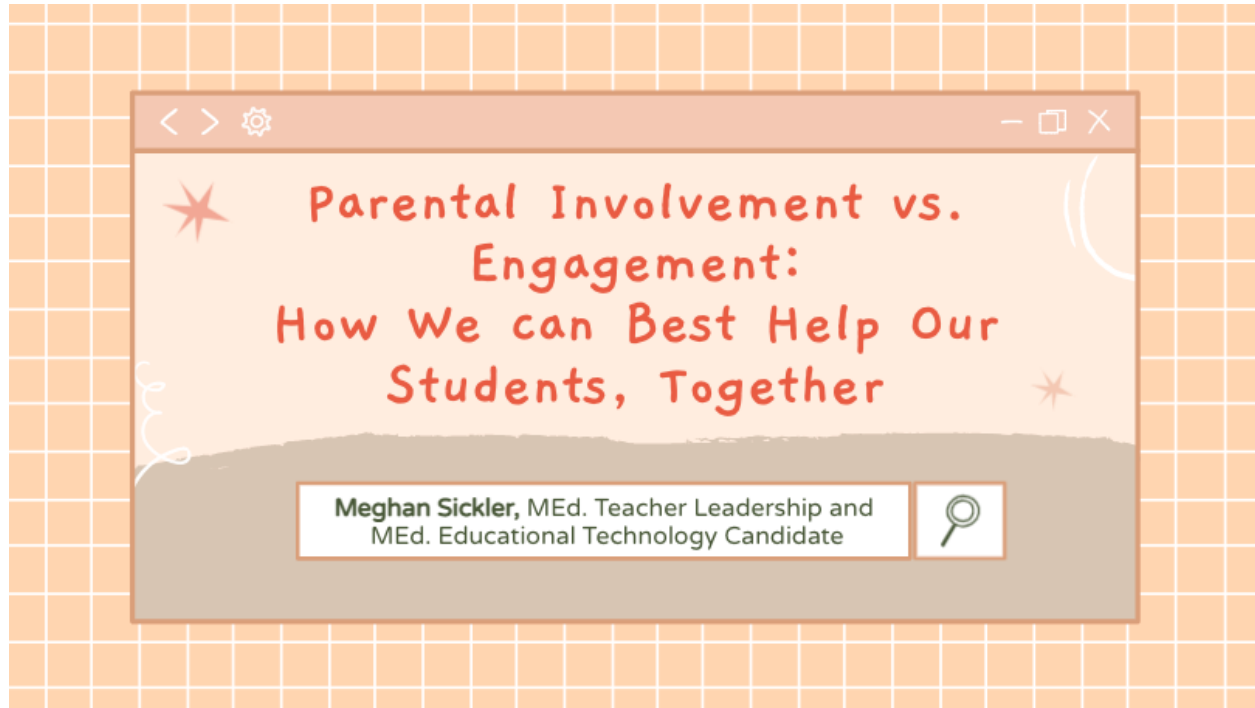
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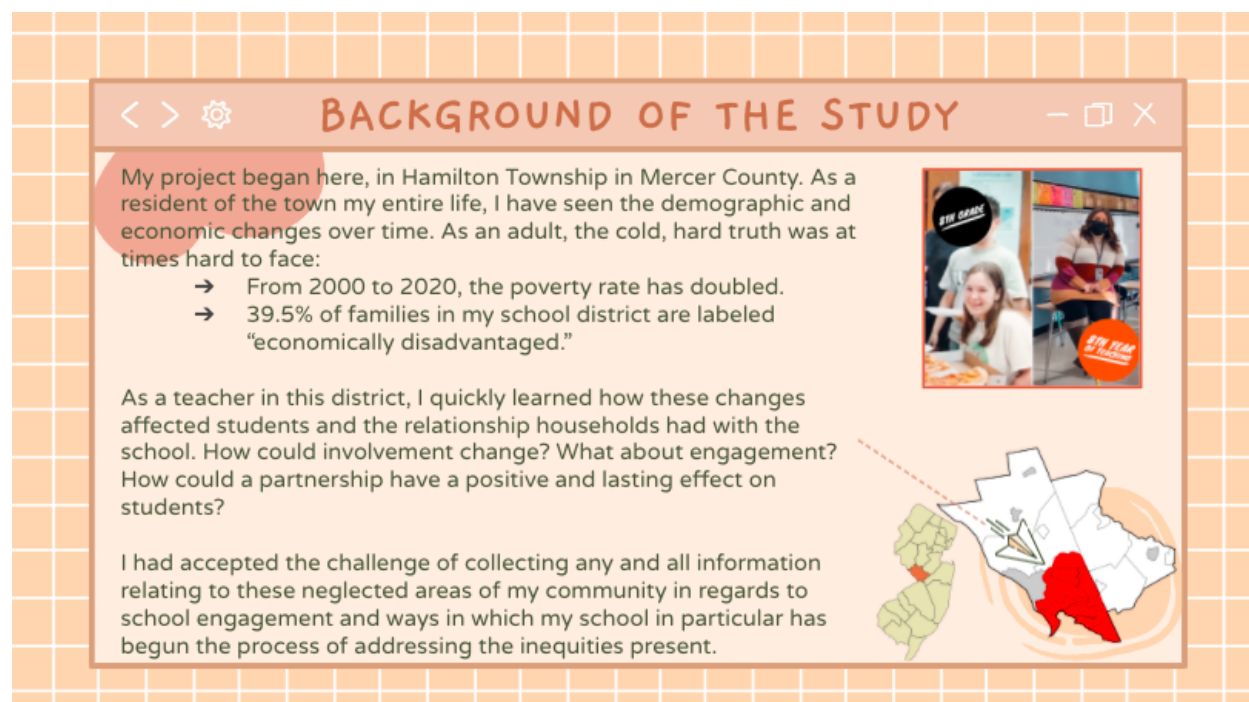
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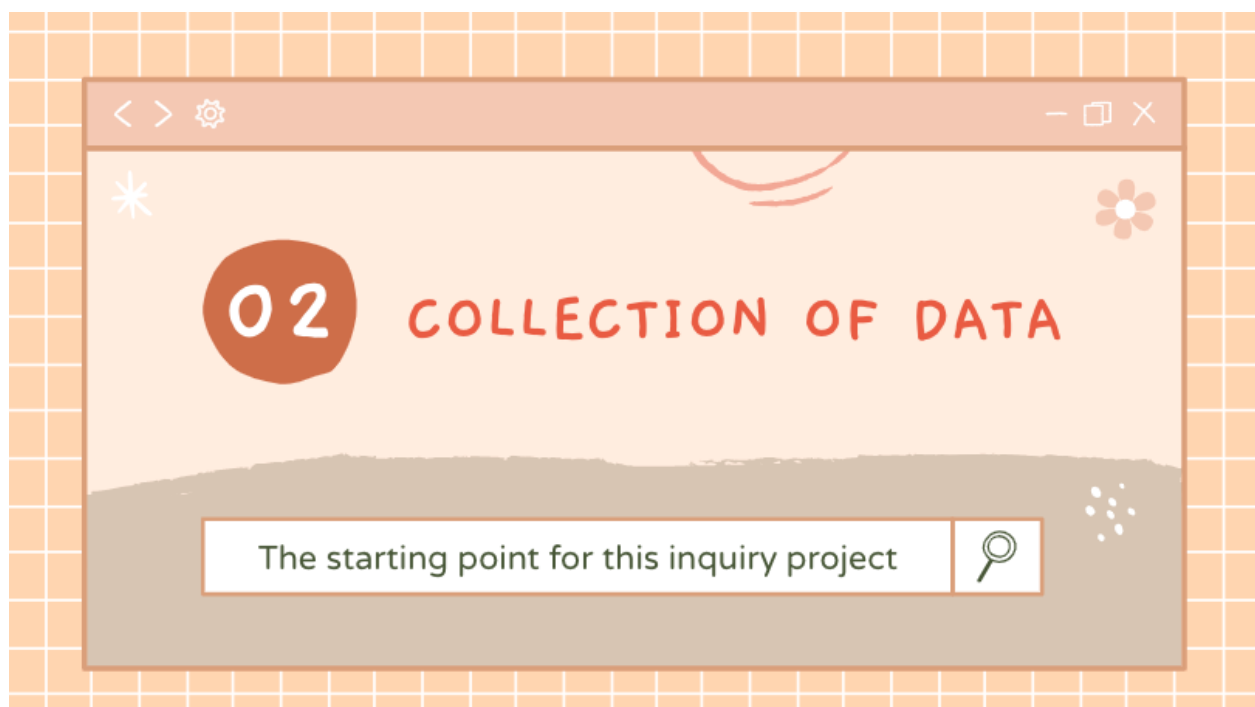
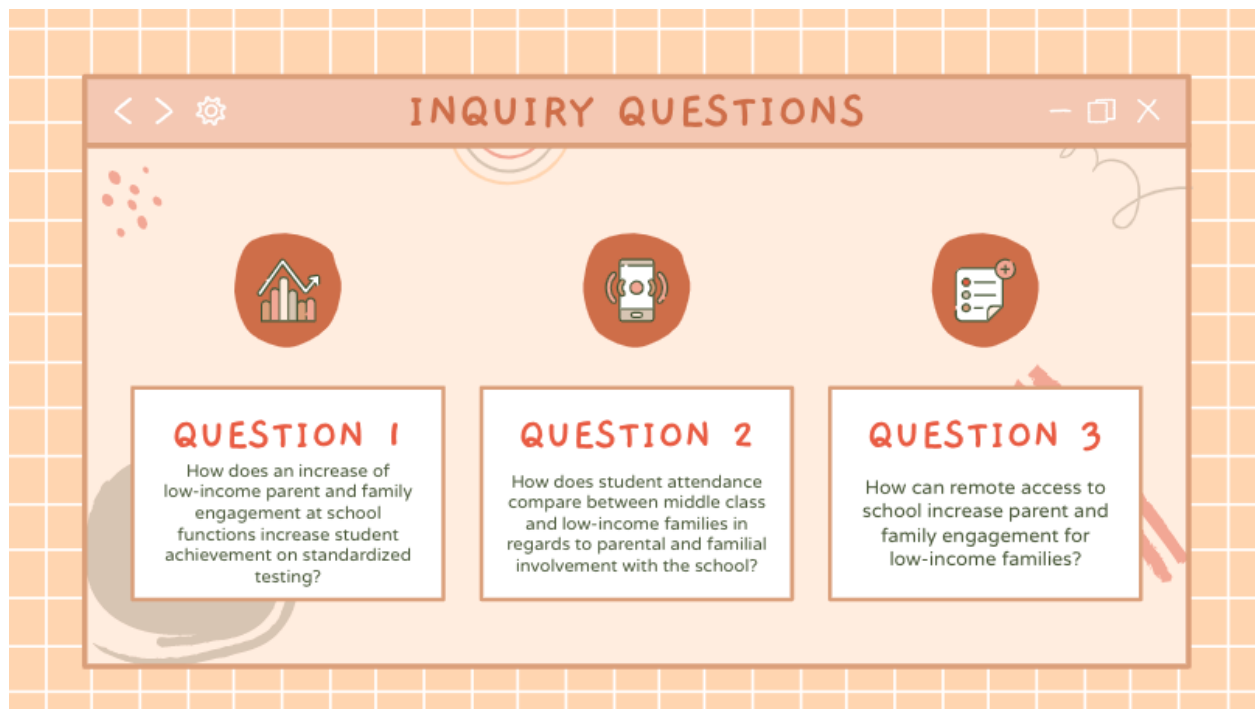
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Link to presentation of material: <https://youtu.be/2TRO66s3wEs>







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ENGAGEMENT ≠ INVOLVEMENT
— □ ×

✱

To find success in identifying how a strong connection between home and school have an effect, whether positive or negative, on a student's academic performance on standardized assessments.

INVOLVEMENT will be defined as connecting with the school and supporting the school to assist the student. This can include responding to teacher emails and phone calls focusing on the student.

ENGAGEMENT will be defined as working with the school to develop a relationship to collaboratively work on ways of improving student achievement.

- Parental engagement in terms of attendance and participation in various school events and functions

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DATA COLLECTION
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KEY

Academic school activities: things such as art, band and choral exhibitions, the Fall Saturday Resource Fair, and the April Virtual Resource fair.

Non-academic school activities: examples include the spring musical and the College & Career Fair.

Community-based activities: these activities include the Harlem Wizards basketball night, the Black History Month Family Night, and the Hispanic Heritage Festival.

School Activities, as per Google Calendar

School Year	Academic	Non-Academic	Community-based
18-19	7	8	8
19-20	4	9	7
20-21	2	1	1

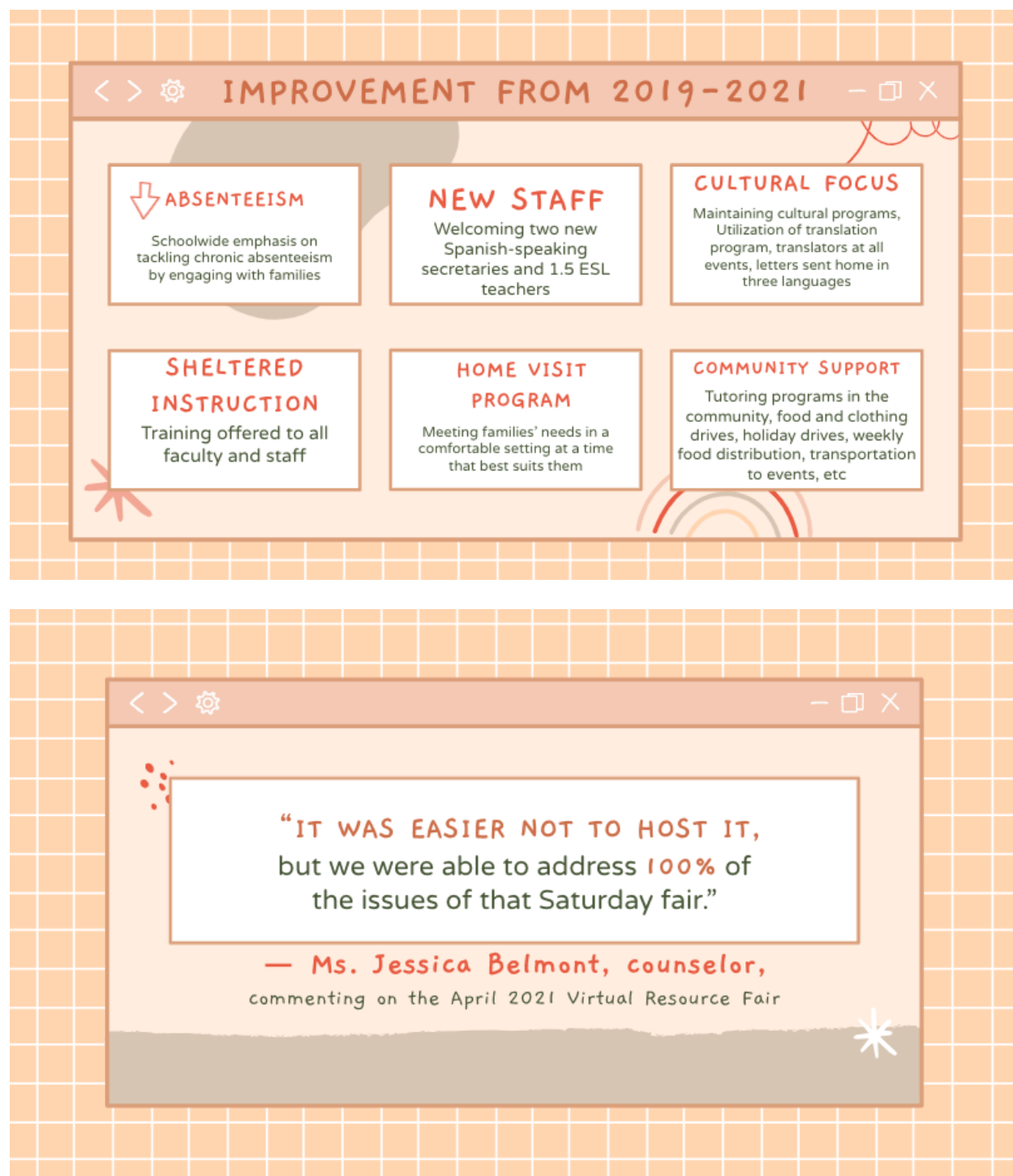
2018-2019
Yielded the most opportunities for engagement but the lowest level of engagement

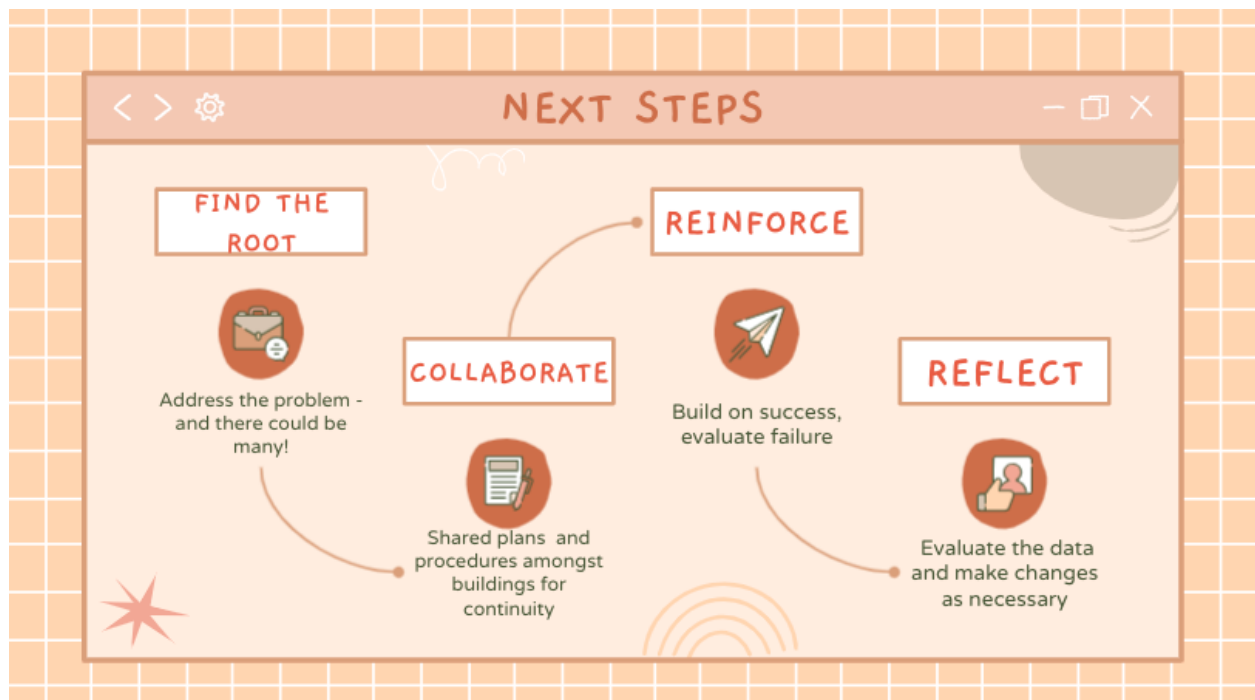
2019-2020
Yielded similar results to the previous year - school shut down and went remote in March 2020

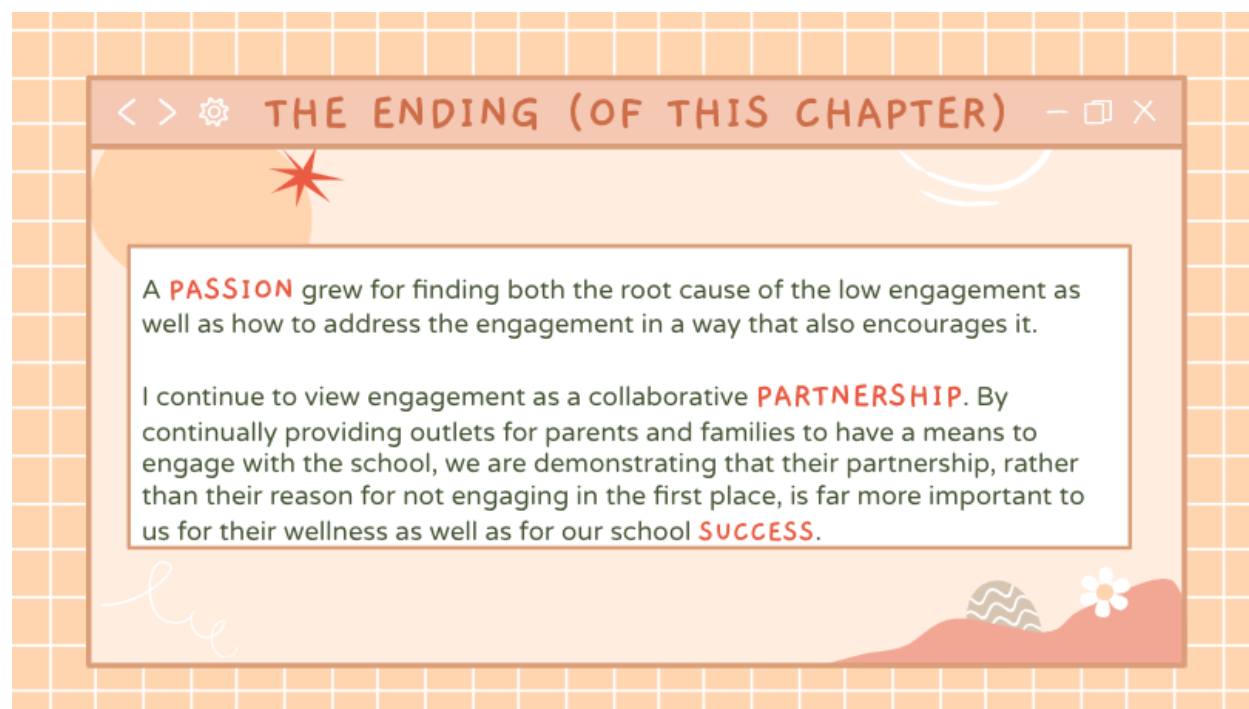
2020-2021
Least events on the calendar but most programs (not events) maintained ✱

Data collected from the GMS school calendar









o. Sickler_Assignment3_SPED08540 - Technology for Students with Special Needs

Name: E.W.

Date: 07/2021

Subject /

Focus Area: English-Language Arts

Examining Current Conditions to Establish Educational Need		
Students (6 points)	Environments (6 points)	Tasks (6 points)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW is currently in an inclusion grade ELA class. EW is averaging 77% C+. She completed the i-Ready diagnostic in September and scored a 592 and is on a Grade 5 level. She tested out of the Phonological Awareness domain, High-Frequency words, and phonics. <i>Evan scored on a grade 4 level in Vocabulary, Grade 7 on Comprehension Literature, and on a grade 6 level on Comprehension Information Text.</i> EW's overall grade went up 1 grade level since 01/2020. <i>She stayed on the same grade level in Vocabulary and progressed 1-grade level in Comprehension Literature from a grade 5 in 1/2020 to a grade 6 in 9/2020.</i> She also 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW is currently scheduled for inclusion ELA during periods 1 and 2. This class runs for 90-minutes consecutively. After this class, EW attends her multisensory reading course. This course contains 19 students, seven of which having an IEP. This course has a general and special education teacher that uses the *team teaching model. When not team teaching, the special education teacher creates *small groups to provide intervention and extra assistance to students based on the task presented. In class, EW has been allowed to *select the seat she feels most comfortable in, focusing on her social and emotional learning for her preferential seating. When 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus skills for EW include citing and building vocabulary. EW needs to cite evidence from the text that will support the inference. Additionally, EW needs to be able to determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a grade-level text. Additionally, EW needs to capitalize all proper nouns. These focus skills are to get EW to perform at grade level. As per NJSLSA.W4 and NJSLSA.W5, by the end of the year, when given a writing assignment, EW

<p>progressed in Comprehension Text from a grade 5 to a grade 6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW has shown growth in asking for help and accepting help since September. EW does so in person by raising her hand as well as remotely by attending a WIN session on Monday afternoons for extra assistance. She brings a lot of great ideas to our classroom discussions. EW is very creative and brings a unique perspective to classroom discussions and activities. EW prefers to and is *allowed to work independently, when applicable, and at her own pace. She excels when *given the daily agenda and *assignments ahead of time so that she can pace herself to limit <u>anxiety and frustration</u>. She also values *being able to read ahead and continue reading when interested. EW elaborates well in written form but <i>often writes incomplete thoughts and does not restate the question. Additionally, EW's writing frequently contains capitalization</i> 	<p>necessary, a *teacher will adjust themselves closer to EW if it is observable that she is struggling or is off task for a prolonged period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While working with a text, the teachers present the text to each student and provide a *read-aloud for students to listen and follow. For written assignments, teachers provide generated *samples of completed work to use as a model. *Rubrics are attached to all Google Classroom assignments to utilize while working. EW is *presented with the daily materials and objectives at the beginning of class so as to pace herself through her work. This is to allow for her to take *frequent breaks as needed. EW has been observed watching youtube videos on science-related topics when she has paused her work. Teacher and case worker observations will be needed to provide objective data regarding the percentage of the class period EW is off task. 	<p>will use the writing processes of planning and revising in assessing if audience and purpose have been adequately addressed utilizing a writing rubric to evaluate and quantify the planning and revision processes with audience and purpose as the focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per NJSLSA.R1, when presented with narrative and/or informational text from EW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, EW will cite 5 examples of textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly. *EW receives special accommodations during NJSLA testing. These accommodations include testing
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<p><i>and punctuation errors.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EW's parents have commented that she has <i>struggled transitioning to remote learning</i>. Initially, EW was able to keep pace with the work, but once the district schedule had changed, EW had <i>trouble engaging</i> in her classes. EW's parents expressed concerns regarding <i>increased anxiety, withdrawing from activities, becoming oppositional at home, and declining academic performance</i>. Pre-pandemic, EW showed interest in art, manga, and participating in her scout troop. They have sought support for EW outside of school including *counseling. To best support EW, more data collection will be required to determine her exact strengths and weaknesses in vocabulary and comprehension. With iReady as one measure, a grade level vocabulary benchmark should be given to assess EW's current vocabulary levels as well as her ability to decode words and use context clues. These 	<p>This will assist teachers and case worker in identifying the tasks that EW finds most frequently off task to then begin developing action plans to assist her in staying focused and on track.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additionally, teachers will need to assess EW's fluency to determine areas of weakness in comprehension. This can be done during a WIN period or during lunch. This should be completed in conjunction with the multisensory reading course. This data will help determine EW's coding abilities, vocabulary skills, context clue development, and ability to work through a difficult text independently. 	<p>in a small group setting in an alternate site, receiving additional time as needed, being provided frequent breaks as needed, and having the directions read aloud and repeated as needed. EW's plan also includes repeating, clarifying, or rewording directions only. Additionally, it is in EW's plan that the examiner should be someone the student is familiar with to limit additional anxiety. These are in place to provide EW with the most equitable learning environment so that he can achieve his best on the state assessment.</p>
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assessments will be completed with teacher collaboration in ELA and multi-sensory reading.		
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- ***Italicize* functional area(s) of concern (2 points)**
- **Underline barriers to student progress (2 points)**
- **Place an asterisk (*) before supports for student progress (2 points)**

Name: P.W.

Date: 07/2021

Subject /

Focus Area: English-Language Arts

Examining Current Conditions to Establish Educational Need		
Students (6 points)	Environments (6 points)	Tasks (6 points)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PW is currently in an inclusion ELA class. PW is averaging a 73% C. He completed the i-Ready diagnostic in September and scored a 562 and <i>is on a Grade 4 level</i>. He tested out of the Phonological Awareness domain, High-Frequency Words, and Phonics. <i>He scored on a grade 4 level in Vocabulary, Grade 3 on Comprehension Literature, and on a grade 6 level on Comprehension Information Text.</i> ● PW's overall grade <i>declined one-grade level</i> from a grade 5 in January 2020 to a grade 4 level in September 2020. <i>He declined in Vocabulary from a grade 6 in 1/2020 to grade 4 in 9/2020. He declined in Comprehension of Literature from a grade 5 to a grade 3 and progressed from a grade 4 level to a grade 6 in Comprehension Informational Text.</i> ● PW participates regularly and adds many great ideas and opinions to our class discussions. PW excels at elaborating on his ideas verbally but has <i>struggled with</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PW is currently scheduled for inclusion ELA during periods 4 and 6. This class period runs for 45 minutes and has a break for lunch before continuing for the second 45-minute block. ● This course contains 24 students, eight of which having an IEP and one student having a 504 plan. ● This course has a general and special education teacher that uses the *team teaching model. When not team teaching, the special education teacher creates *small groups to provide intervention and extra assistance to students based on the task presented. ● In this class, PW is given *preferential seating to maximize opportunities to engage with instruction. For some activities, this may find PW at the front of the room, and for others, he may be stationed near a teacher's desk. ● While working with a text, the teachers present the text to each student and provide a *read-aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus skills for PW include citing and building vocabulary. PW needs to cite evidence from the text that will support the inference. Additionally, PW needs to be able to determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a grade-level text. Additionally, PW needs to capitalize all proper nouns. These focus skills are to get PW to perform at grade level. ● As per NJSLSA.R.1, by the end of the year, when presented with narrative and/or informational text from PW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, PW will cite 5 examples of textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly.
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<p><i>elaborating in written form. PW often does not proofread his work and does not correct basic errors in capitalization and punctuation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PW's beginning of the year student survey indicated that he has strong auditory skills and prefers to hear readings in addition to seeing them (*ex: using an audiobook while reading along in the text). He is an avid user of the computer, his phone, and game consoles at home and spends a great deal of time reading on devices. PW was <u>diagnosed with ADHD</u> in November of 2018. Both PW and his parents have commented on <u>his inability to hold attention to work for extended periods of time</u>. However, his parents have commented on how well they and PW feel he did during remote learning. • More conclusive data is required to determine PW's strengths and weaknesses in regards to vocabulary acquisition. With iReady as one measure, a grade level 	<p>for students to listen and follow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For written assignments, teachers provide generated *samples of completed work to use as a model. *Rubrics are attached to all Google Classroom assignments to utilize while working. • PW remains seated for the majority of the class period, although *given the ability to move as needed. PW is frequently observed checking his phone, which denotes an off task behavior. Teacher and case worker observations will be needed to provide objective data regarding the percentage of the class period PW is off task. This will assist teachers and case worker in identifying the tasks that PW finds most frequently off task to then begin developing action plans to assist him in staying focused and on track. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per NJSLSA.R.4 and NJSLSA.L.1, when presented with narrative and/or informational text from PW's content area subjects on the Eighth grade level, PW will state the meanings of 5 words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings. • *PW receives special accommodations during NJSLA testing. These accommodations include testing in a small group setting in an alternate site, receiving additional time as needed, being provided frequent breaks as needed, and having the directions read aloud and repeated as needed. PW's plan also includes repeating,
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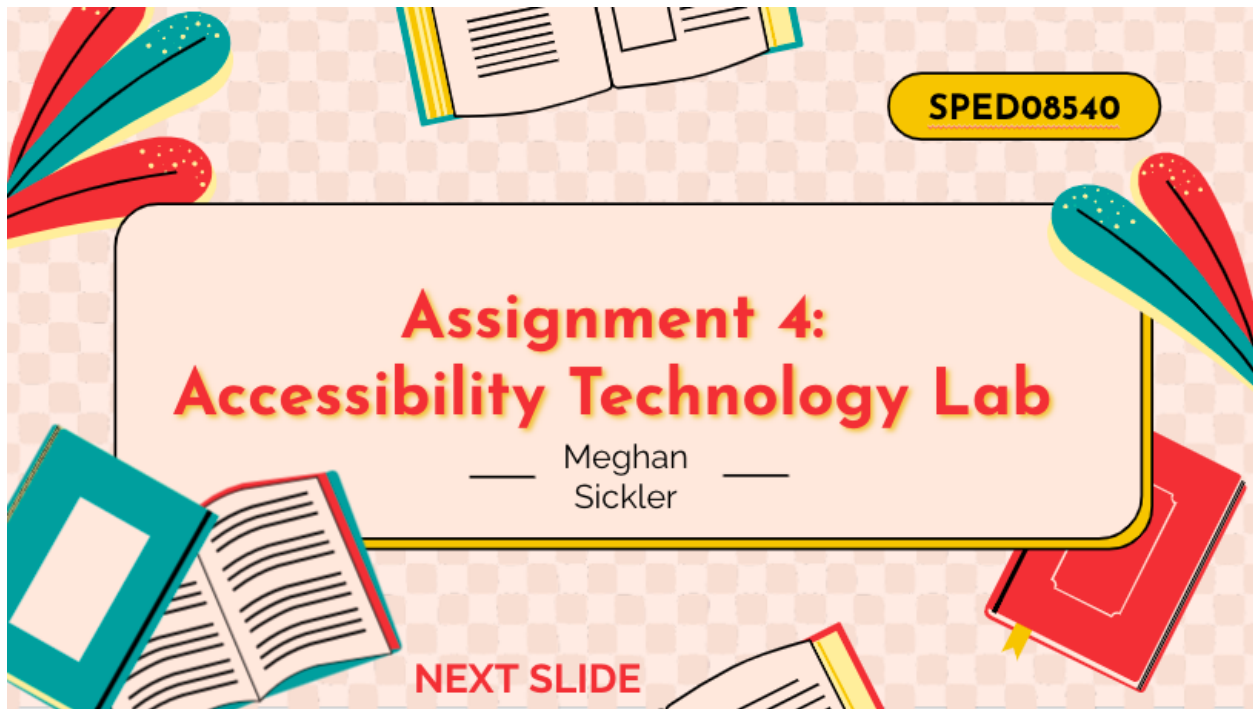
<p>vocabulary benchmark should be given to assess PW's current vocabulary levels as well as his ability to decode words, use context clues, and determine synonyms and antonyms when given a passage.</p>		<p>clarifying, or rewording directions only. These are in place to provide PW with the most equitable learning environment so that he can achieve his best on the state assessment.</p>
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- ***Italicize functional area(s) of concern (2 points)***
- **Underline barriers to student progress (2 points)**
- ***Place an asterisk (*) before supports for student progress (2 points)***

p. Sickler_Assignment4p1_SPED08540 - Technology for Students with Special Needs

Link to presentation with videos of each accommodation in use:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vRPQBJ4taS15oIf46eb0pCVw1YFf-Q27lxgJeknJ5p7F6VrPyHmq4qqGGdZ6eqOuDWJbK8TVdbGfsz/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000>

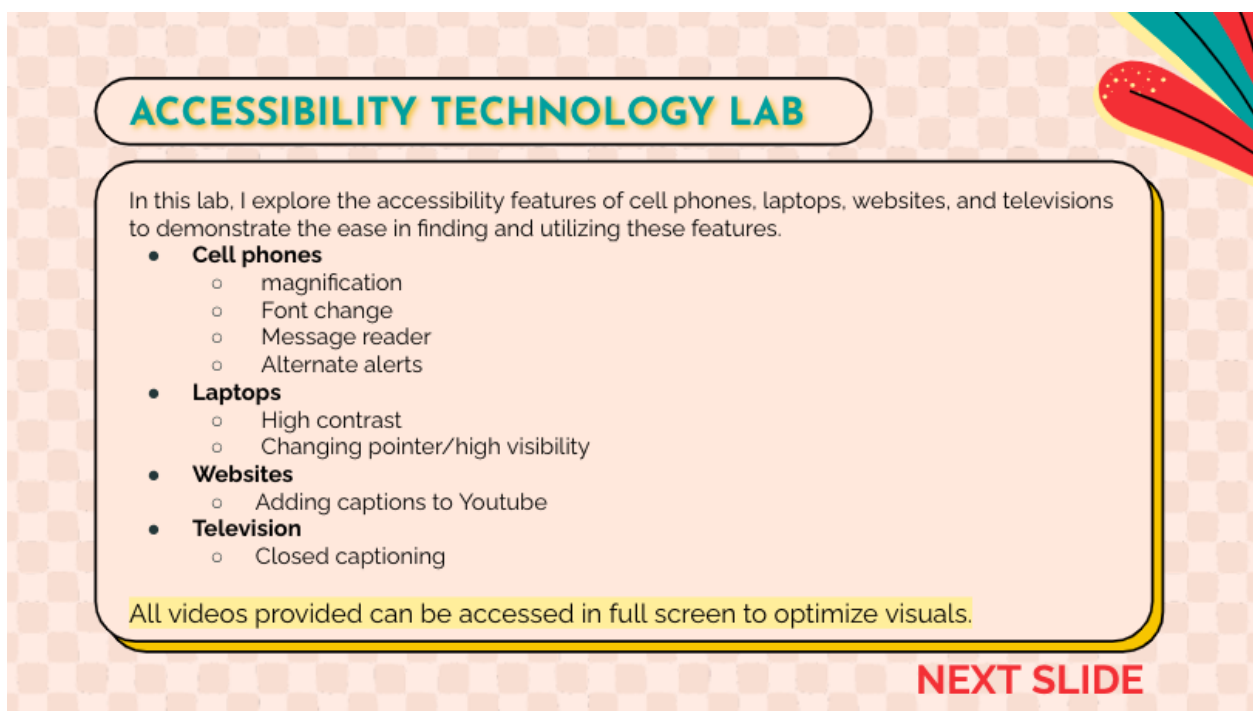
The slide features a light pink background with a subtle checkerboard pattern. It is decorated with colorful, stylized illustrations of books and papers in red, teal, and yellow. In the top right corner, a yellow rounded rectangle contains the text "SPED08540". The main title, "Assignment 4: Accessibility Technology Lab", is centered in a large, bold, red font. Below the title, the name "Meghan Sickler" is centered, flanked by horizontal lines. At the bottom center, the text "NEXT SLIDE" is written in a bold, red font.

SPED08540

Assignment 4: Accessibility Technology Lab

— Meghan Sickler —

NEXT SLIDE

This slide continues the theme of the previous one with the same background and decorative elements. At the top, a yellow rounded rectangle contains the title "ACCESSIBILITY TECHNOLOGY LAB" in a bold, teal font. Below this, a paragraph of text explains the lab's purpose. This is followed by a bulleted list of topics and their features. At the bottom, a yellow highlighted box contains a note about video access. The text "NEXT SLIDE" appears in red at the bottom right.

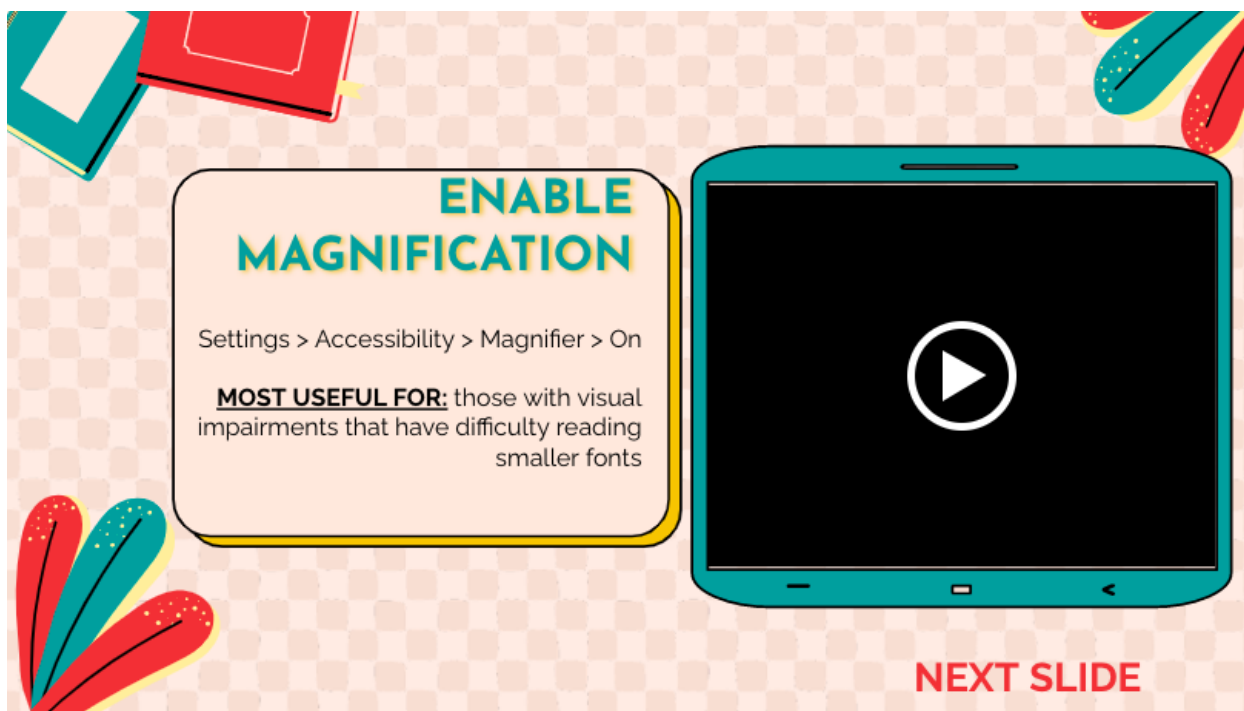
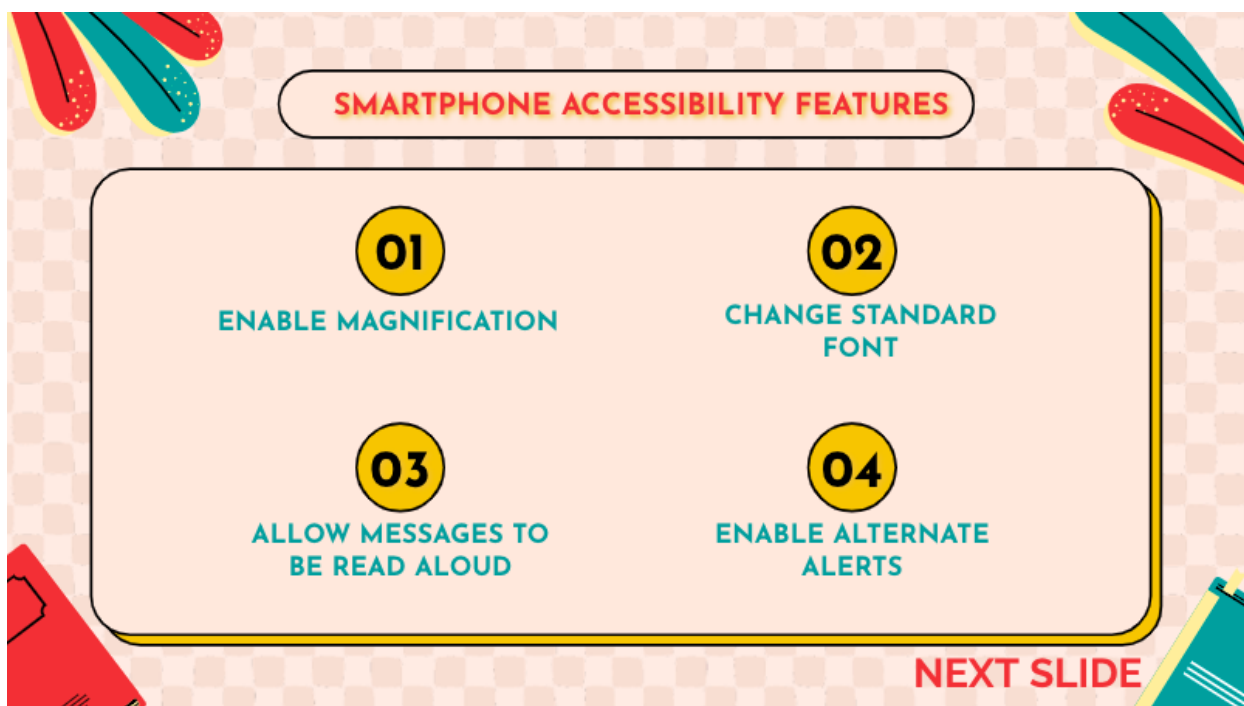
ACCESSIBILITY TECHNOLOGY LAB

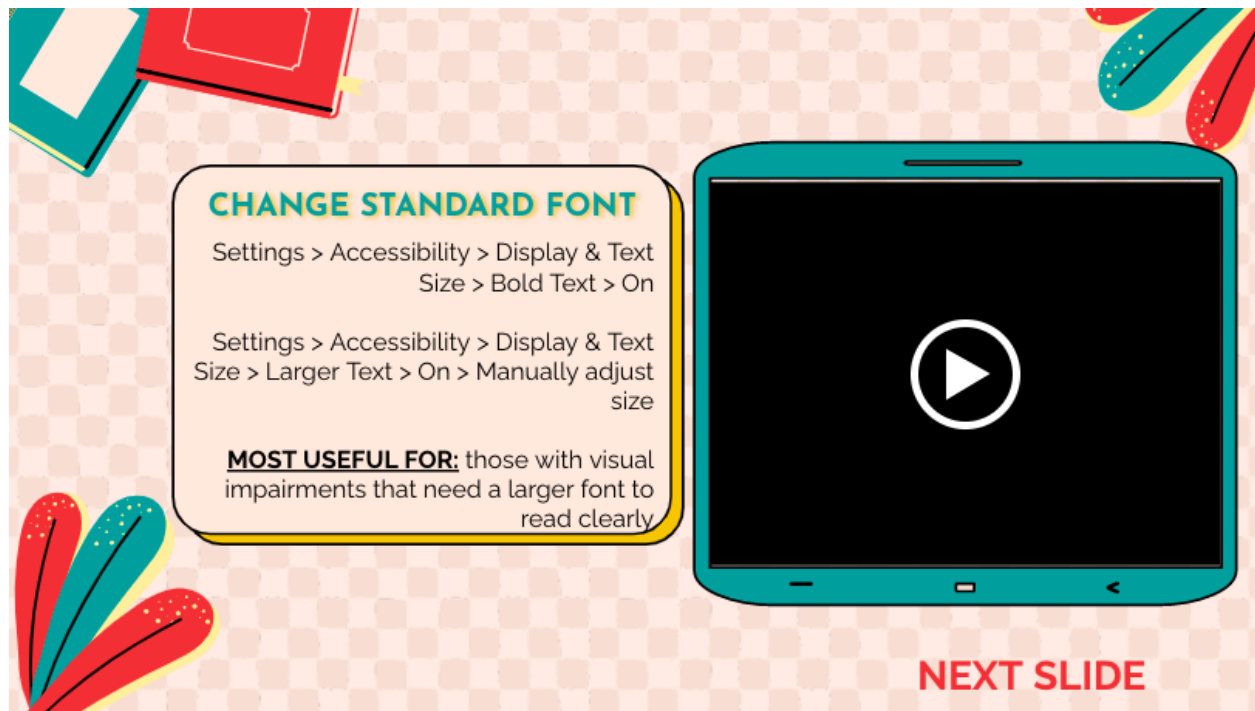
In this lab, I explore the accessibility features of cell phones, laptops, websites, and televisions to demonstrate the ease in finding and utilizing these features.

- **Cell phones**
 - magnification
 - Font change
 - Message reader
 - Alternate alerts
- **Laptops**
 - High contrast
 - Changing pointer/high visibility
- **Websites**
 - Adding captions to Youtube
- **Television**
 - Closed captioning

All videos provided can be accessed in full screen to optimize visuals.

NEXT SLIDE






CHANGE STANDARD FONT

Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size > Bold Text > On

Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size > Larger Text > On > Manually adjust size

MOST USEFUL FOR: those with visual impairments that need a larger font to read clearly



NEXT SLIDE



ALLOW MESSAGES TO BE READ ALOUD

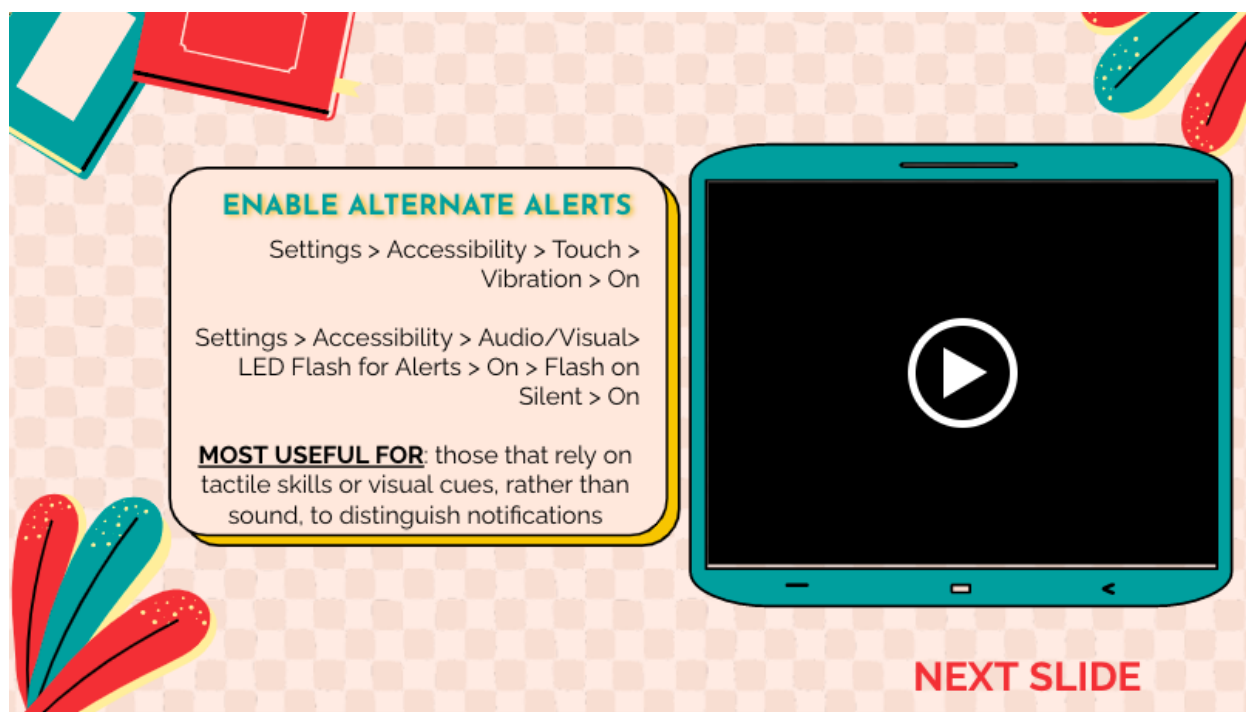
Settings > Accessibility > Spoken Content > Speak Selection > On

I also turned on Highlight Content > Background

MOST USEFUL FOR: those with visual impairments to hear content, those in need of a multisensory display



NEXT SLIDE



ENABLE ALTERNATE ALERTS

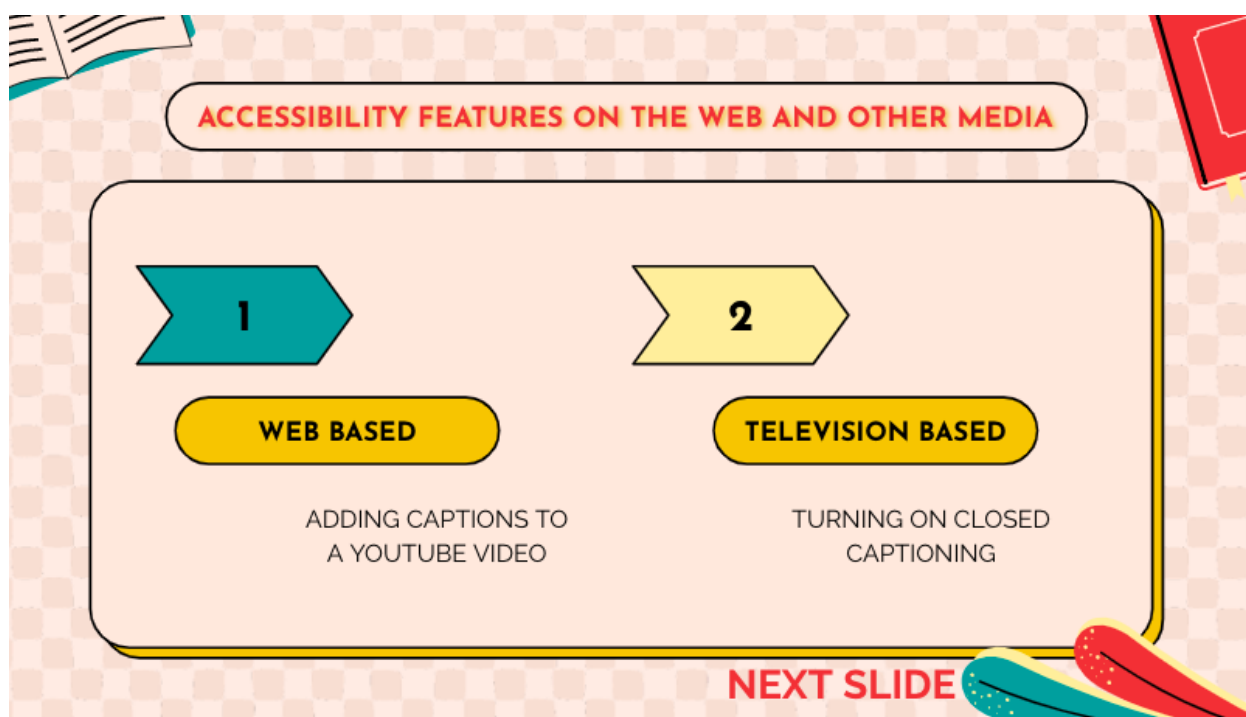
Settings > Accessibility > Touch > Vibration > On

Settings > Accessibility > Audio/Visual > LED Flash for Alerts > On > Flash on Silent > On

MOST USEFUL FOR: those that rely on tactile skills or visual cues, rather than sound, to distinguish notifications

NEXT SLIDE

The infographic features a light pink checkered background with colorful abstract shapes in the corners. A central white box with a yellow border contains the text. To the right is a blue tablet with a black screen and a white play button icon. The text 'NEXT SLIDE' is in red at the bottom right.



ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES ON THE WEB AND OTHER MEDIA

1

WEB BASED

ADDING CAPTIONS TO A YOUTUBE VIDEO

2

TELEVISION BASED

TURNING ON CLOSED CAPTIONING

NEXT SLIDE

The infographic has a light pink checkered background with colorful abstract shapes. A large white box with a yellow border contains the content. At the top is a red banner with the title. Below are two columns. The first column has a blue arrow with the number '1', a yellow box with 'WEB BASED', and the text 'ADDING CAPTIONS TO A YOUTUBE VIDEO'. The second column has a yellow arrow with the number '2', a yellow box with 'TELEVISION BASED', and the text 'TURNING ON CLOSED CAPTIONING'. The text 'NEXT SLIDE' is in red at the bottom right.



This slide features a light pink and white checkerboard background. On the left is a teal tablet with a black screen and a white play button icon. To the right is a yellow-bordered box with a red header and blue text. The slide is decorated with colorful abstract shapes and book icons in the corners.

**WEB BASED:
ADDING CAPTIONS
ON YOUTUBE**

MOST USEFUL FOR: those with auditory impairments to guarantee comprehension of the video; additional changes are helpful to those that struggle visually with contrast issues

NEXT SLIDE

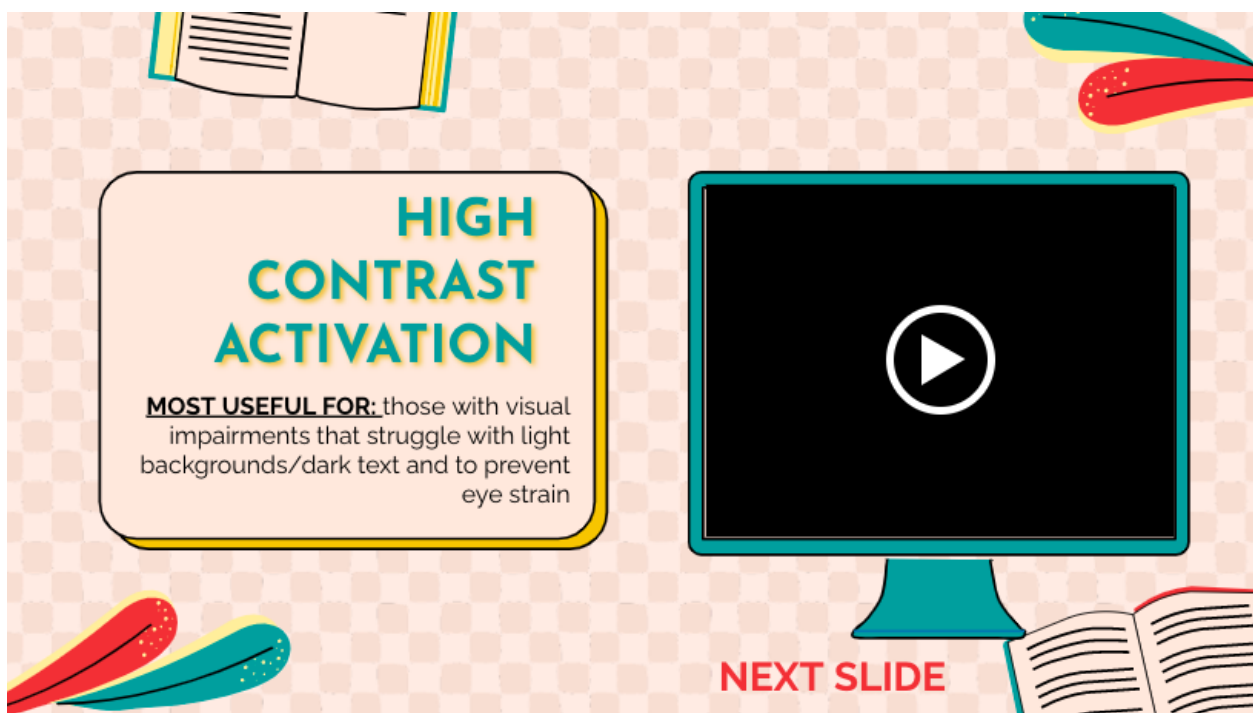
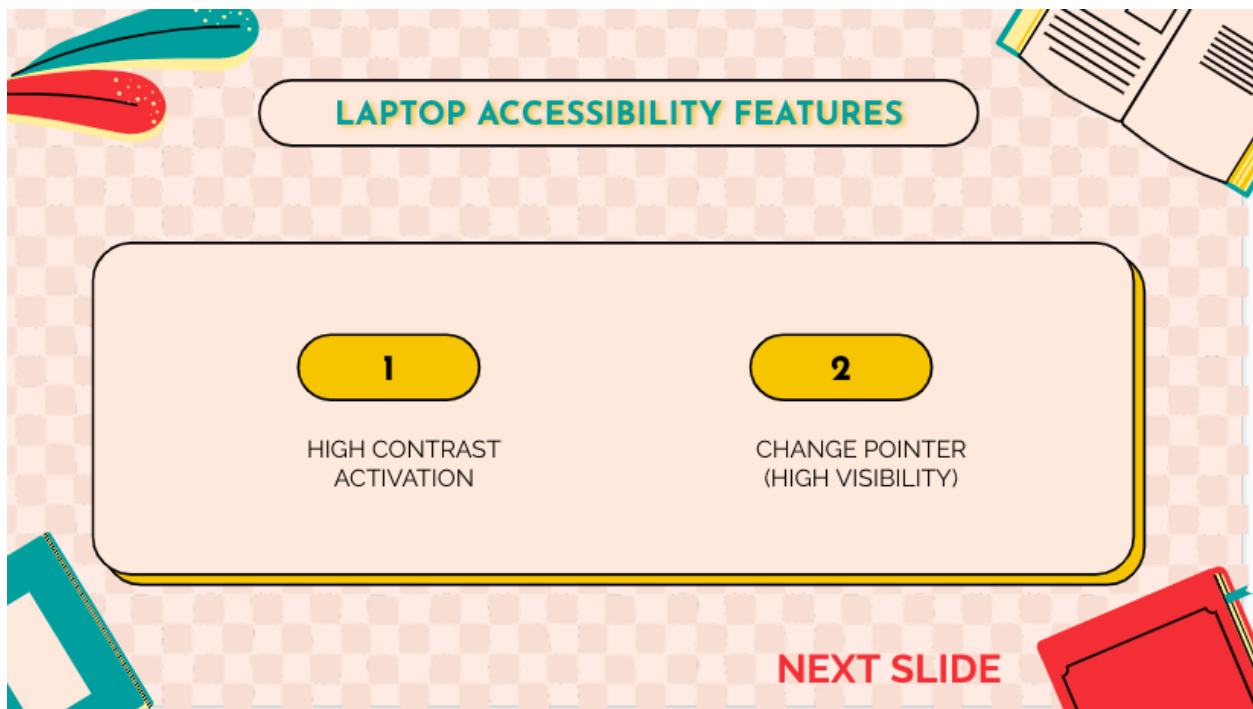


This slide features a light pink and white checkerboard background. On the left is a teal tablet with a black screen and a white play button icon. To the right is a yellow-bordered box with a red header and blue text. The slide is decorated with colorful abstract shapes and book icons in the corners.

**TELEVISION BASED:
CLOSED CAPTIONING**

MOST USEFUL FOR: those with auditory impairments to prevent altering the volume to a damaging level; those with contrast issues/visual impairments that would benefit from utilizing that tool to increase reading

NEXT SLIDE





q. Sickler_Assignment5_EDTC33585 - Internet in the Classroom

Introduction

Cyber bullying, at its core, involves “aggression, repetition, and an imbalance of power” through digital environments (Roblyer, 2019, p.24). When traditional bullying ensues on a school campus, administrators, counselors, and teachers are well equipped with protocols and procedures to address the incident. Is this true of cyberbullying? With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic still evolving in schools daily, addressing cyberbullying has become an even greater challenge for administrators and H.I.B. teams. With its easy accessibility and anonymity, cyberbullying is at an all time high. The Cyberbullying Research Center recently surveyed a nationally-representative sample of 4,500 12-17 year-olds and concluded that while 44% of

students reported being bullied in the past 30 days, 17% (or 765 students) have been cyberbullied in the last 30 days. Additionally, of those who had identified as having been cyberbullied, 83% had also experienced bullying at school recently (Patchen et al., 2017). The remote climate does not exclude negative behaviors, and as in the case study provided below, it may even exemplify them.

Background

The setting of this case study at Albert E. Grice Middle School, one of twenty-three schools in the Hamilton Township School District in Hamilton, New Jersey. Currently, 53% of Grice's 926 students are learning entirely remotely. The remaining 47% participate in hybrid learning and enter the building one to two times per week. At the time of the cyberbullying incident described in this case study, 100% of the student population was learning from home in the remote setting. This incident occurred in late September of 2020, the first month of school. All student names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect student anonymity. All staff members' names have been removed from this case study, with the exception of the vice principal, with her permission.

Incident

While on the remote learning, Sarah, an eighth grader, reached out to her math teacher regarding something that had concerned her. A friend of Sarah's had texted her something that had upset Sarah, and she provided it to the teacher. It was an image of Sarah from a Google Meet. She was sitting as she had just been, in front of her computer, participating in class. However, someone had taken the picture and shared it on Snapchat with the captions "not the emo kid," "she probably got a barcode on her wrist," and "IYKYK", while tagging the "Bullying Weirdos" and "School Vlogs" pages. "Something we hadn't been initially aware of," Vice

Principal Cheryl Piotrowski shared, “was that ‘barcodes on wrists’ meant cutting” (Sickler, 2020).

Promptly after receiving this information, the math teacher proceeded to contact Sarah’s guidance counselor to report the incident. Due to the nature of remote learning, Sarah’s counselor scheduled a Google Meet to discuss the incident at hand and receive a firsthand account of the incident in question. At this point, Sarah identified a list of suspects based on the username located at the bottom of the screenshot image shared with her; additionally, she made accusations regarding other students based on their character and previous behaviors. Sarah never identified to the counselor the source of the image, the friend that sent the picture to Sarah in the first place. Concurrent with Sarah’s accusations, the administration had two suspects in mind based on the student username at the bottom of the image as well as the note at the top reading “Josh’s camera roll.” The evidence on the image suggested two students: Josh and Luke.

In conferencing with the counselor and being provided with the initial information of the investigation, Mrs. Piotrowski decided to initiate a H.I.B. report. She had provided the following information regarding H.I.B. protocol:

Anytime we look at a bullying situation or suspect a bullying situation, the H.I.B. team asks three questions to determine if a H.I.B. should be initiated. The questions include 1) Was there a characteristic being targeted?, 2) Was there a substantial disruption or interference with the orderly operations of the school or rights of other students, and 3) Was there any physical or emotional harm to a student or property? With cyberbullying, the lines are often harder to see, but ultimately, the call is made in terms of the best interest of the student (Sickler, 2020).

Due to the emotional harm the comments had inflicted upon Sarah, Mrs. Piotrowski deemed that this was a situation that warranted investigating harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Mrs. Piotrowski then enlisted the S.A.C., or student assistance counselor, to continue the investigation. Concurrently, the vice principal reached out to Sarah’s parents to make them

aware of the situation that had occurred as well as the impending investigation. The S.A.C. reached out to Sarah as well as the possible offenders to gather her information.

In meeting with the S.A.C., both Josh and Luke, the suspected offenders, openly admitted to reposting the image on their social media accounts; however, neither boy admitted to taking the picture, and Josh, the student whose name appeared on the image itself, denied making any comments on or toward the image. “Instant student honesty in this type of situation is a rare occurrence. It’s rare for them to openly admit to making a poor decision like reposting the image,” commented Mrs. Piotrowski. After the S.A.C. had completed her investigation, Mrs. Piotrowski called the students to confirm the findings and provide them due process. At this point, the two boys, Josh and Luke, were given an administrative consequence. At the end of the investigation, this incident was deemed a H.I.B. case.

Consequences and Follow-Up

Josh and Luke received an administrative consequence of 40-days not in good standing. “This was the standard consequence that the administrative team deemed reasonable during remote learning,” commented Mrs. Piotrowski (Sickler, 2020). Upon the students’ return to school after the initial remote learning start, the boys would be unable to participate in school sponsored activities. “Had this occurred in the traditional setting,” she continued, “the students would have been charged with code of conduct infractions, cell phone offences, and so on... Consequences could have ranged from community service to in-school suspension” (Sickler, 2020).

The counselor and S.A.C. followed up with Sarah to ensure her physical and emotional safety. Sarah was not previously identified as someone to partake in self harm; however, they wanted to make sure that this event didn’t put her in a bad headspace or alter her perceptions

regarding self harm. Additionally, the S.A.C. invited Sarah to participate in the Diversity Club afterschool program to provide her a positive community at school. Two months later, Sarah is a hybrid student that comes to the building once or twice a week. Josh attends two days a week while Luke remains fully remote.

Implications of Cyberbullying in the COVID Era

Addressing cyberbullying instances has proven to be challenging for a variety of reasons, such as providing consequences and discipline, drawing the line between school and parental responsibility, and providing resources and preventative measures.

Consequences and Discipline

It soon became clear at the conclusion of revisiting this cyberbullying case that the students Josh and Luke ended up receiving a consequence that would not directly impact them to serve as a reminder of their behavior. In discussing potential consequences with Mrs. Piotrowski, she had shared her perspective on the matter. “Students cannot have technology taken away as a consequence for poor online behavior because that then takes away their education during remote learning,” she had concluded (Sickler, 2020). Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school is not prepared with staff nor spacing to create places where students can serve something similar to the traditions in-school suspension. Traditional does not apply to pandemic teaching or, in this case, pandemic cyberbullying. Mrs. Piotrowski summed it up well in saying, “We do not have the same access to students that we normally have, but the scariest part of all is that through technology, students have more access to one another. We hope they use that power responsibly and have to plan for the instances when they do not” (Sickler, 2020).

School responsibilities

While in the remote setting, the line between school and parental responsibility regarding student technology use becomes very unclear. Students are utilizing school technology which is accessible by teachers, administrators, and the technology department. On the other hand, students may use this during the weekends and non-school hours as their device, blurring the line of who should address any issues that arise regarding cyberbullying during off-peak times. In many instances, parents or guardians are home during incidents of cyberbullying which raises the question of responsibility. Many parents and guardians are not well-versed in modern technology and applications, so they may be unaware of what is happening at home due to the platform being used. With language barrier difficulties and access to technology minimal, socio-economic status and diversity then play a big factor in allowing school administrators to communicate with parents and guardians regarding incidents and the role of each in the situation.

Prevention

Functioning remotely and in a hybrid state has drastically altered how this school can provide resources to promote positive technological interactions and ways to be positive digital citizens. The guidance department works to provide digital resources for their once in-person lessons regarding digital education and the implications of words said on social media. This includes lessons in being an upstander versus a bystander. Additionally, in 6th grade health, the School Resource Officer instructs students on cyberbullying from the standpoint of a police officer to inform students about their decisions.

Assemblies once provided in the school setting are cancelled due to the uncertainty of how students may respond without the support of the guidance counselors. Mrs. Piotrowski elaborated that Dr. Mykee provides a yearly assembly for the 8th grade class on diversity and acceptance that touches upon heavy topics, but due to COVID-19 and the remote setting,

concerns were raised on how students would process the information independently at home without guidance support.

Conclusion

In the case of Sarah and the image, taking her picture without her consent and writing disparaging comments inciting self harm qualified this incident as a case of cyberbullying. The COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning structure added challenges to the investigation as well as administration of consequences to the offenders as well as the follow-up and accessibility to the victim to ensure her physical and mental well being. With the assistance of Vice Principal Cheryl Piotrowski, this case study identifies the ways in which cyberbullying has created new setbacks for administrators to ensure the safety of all students in the digital world.

References

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r. Sickler_Assignment5_LDTC18510 - Applied Learning Theories

Chapters 7 - Cognitive Learning Processes

Key Points:

- Metacognition means “thinking about thinking.” In clearer terms it is essentially people’s awareness of their own cognitive processes.
- Conditional knowledge is knowledge about when and why to use forms of declarative and procedural knowledge. Simply having the required knowledge to perform a task doesn’t guarantee that students will do well. The key is for students to know when certain skills and knowledge is appropriate for a given task. Declarative knowledge relates to “knowing that” (specific content, task features, beliefs). Procedural knowledge is

“knowing how” (math algorithms, reading strategies, goal setting). Conditional knowledge is “knowing when and why” (when applying certain skills is appropriate, such as skimming).

- Schunk’s example relates to students in class knowing what to do (read a chapter of the text), know the meanings of the vocabulary words (declarative knowledge), and know how to read for understanding (procedural knowledge). However, they choose to skim the chapter and ultimately do poorly. In this situation, knowing when skimming a text is appropriate is conditional knowledge. (pg.259).
- Metacognition develops slowly and begins to develop between ages 5 to 7. . Young students aren’t aware of what processes the tasks they complete involve. Alternatively, older students don’t always monitor their comprehension and are poor judges of how well they comprehend a text or task. This reinforces the ideas that metacognitive thought needs to be taught and practiced regularly to strengthen one’s ability to evaluate the that, how, why, and when of one’s thinking and decision making abilities.
- There are multiple variables that influence metacognition, including
 - Learner variables: learner development, age, memory, intelligence/ability
 - Task variables: the level of metacognition required for a task (low level Bloom’s vs. high level Bloom’s)
 - Strategy Variables: strategies students employ depend on the task and having the strategy doesn’t guarantee its use

Applications

- I was definitely interested in the variables that impact metacognition in a classroom. Much like Gardner’s multiple intelligences, research has found that a student will favor

one learning style over another depending on the situation presented. Similarly, students may display different metacognitive strategies depending on the learning task presented to them. Lower level tasks such as memorization have a place in learning, but if higher level tasks aren't presented, students will not apply those strategies. Frequent reflection and application of all levels (just like Bloom's taxonomy) are important to foster use and reliance of all of the strategies students have in their toolboxes.

- The link between metacognition and behavior explains a lot of what many of us see in our classrooms. A student's choice to not utilize metacognitive strategies often results in lower achievement. Therefore, as stated in my DQ as well as linked in my article reflection, teachers need to teach and value metacognitive strategies as they do content area knowledge. Students need to be taught a range of activities ranging from "those applying to learning in general (such as determining the purpose in learning) to those applying to specific situations (such as underlining important points in text), and they need to be encouraged to use them in various contexts" (pg.264). We can look at choosing not to teach these concepts as ill-preparing students for an exam. In essence, they are being set up for the struggle they are about to face. Teaching the "what" information (the content area knowledge) without the "when, where, and why" only lead to misunderstandings, lack of retention, and overall confusion, and eventually, teachers will see a decline in student achievement, student self-efficacy, and student attendance, as well as an increase in concerns regarding SEL.

s. Sickler_Assignment9_EDTC33510 - Emerging Technology Tools and the Curriculum

Final Reflection

At the beginning of the semester, I wasn't sure what to expect from a course entitled "Emerging Tech. Tools and Curriculum." I felt that I had a strong hand in *my* curriculum and with the topics I have worked with for years, and I felt that I had a moderate understanding of how to incorporate technology into my classroom. This course, however, showed me different perspectives I hadn't considered before.

Throughout this course, I learned that my comfort zone with technology tends to be in the realm of presentation software. I feel that using technology as a means to express what you know or have learned is a creative approach to content and can connect with multiple types of learners. Being able to work with Google Sites actually met a personal goal of mine in being able to

practice using the technology in preparation for restructuring my class for the fall. While it proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated (something I had actually shared with my group in DQ 7), I think I did well with the “trial by fire” approach to simply learning the technology by interacting with it. It feels that that method is important in regards to technology; there are many instances where tutorials and videos are great, but the best method to learn how to use something is to go ahead and get your hands dirty with it! I can conclude that my experience with Google Sites in this class helped me to have a better understanding of it, and I now feel more comfortable utilizing it in my classroom.

As I look back on this course, I value the exposure I had to the ISTE student standards. I have spent more time interpreting them outside of our class and have begun incorporating them into my weekly lesson plans as well as my plans for push-in intervention. It is so important to value the technology standards as highly as content standards, especially during this pandemic and during times when we rely on technology for all instruction.

This course definitely challenged my outlook on incorporating technology as a tool during the process and not simply a tool to demonstrate the learning from the process. I look forward to working on incorporating it more earlier in my lessons and units to enhance the learning from the early stages.

t. Sickler_CulminatingProject_EDTC33585 - Internet in the Classroom**TTIPP Lesson 1**

Activity being utilized: WebSmarts

Location in unit: Lessons 4,5,6,7,8

Phase 1: Analysis of Teaching and Learning

- What is the problem of practice or main content of your topic?
 - As an ELA teacher, I observed that my students are citing resources from online sources. While they are using the internet to gain information, the sources they find are not always reliable. Therefore, this lesson was created to address the need to be able to judge if a website or digital source is credible before using the information from it.

- What are the technology resources that your students, their families, you, and your school could bring as assets to the lesson?
 - My students each have a district-provided laptop. Additionally, internet access is available from the district for any family that does not have internet access at home. At this time, all of my students are able to access the internet on their school device. Additionally, all of my students have access to my Google Classroom, our digital hub for work and information.
- What are the technological possibilities for helping to solve the identified problem if practice? Identify the technology(ies) you will integrate into the lesson to ensure that you have the skills and resources you need to solve the problem.
 - To target the concept of internet safety and valuable sources of information, I would focus on incorporating the material represented in multiple ways, utilizing tools such as: a live stream of myself modeling finding untrustworthy sources online, a Quizziz anticipatory set activity, a video of myself providing direct instruction, a Google Slides presentation with step by step instructions, the WebSmarts interactive activity, and a Jamboard for a collection of student data. Later in the semester, for the final assessment, I plan on having the students develop their own product teaching other students how to safely search for material. This can be done using a Google Doc (essay), Google Slides presentation, PixtonEdu comic, or a Prezi organizer presentation.

Phase 2: Design of the Integration Framework

- What are the objectives of the lesson plan?

- For this lesson, students will be able to identify anchor questions to ask when on a website to determine its validity and will be able to model how to find a safe and reliable source.
- How will you assess your students' accomplishment of the objectives?
 - Using a checklist during the lesson and a rubric during the final assessment, I will gauge if my students understand the steps to safely searching and finding information on the internet.
- What integration strategies will you use in the lesson plan?
 - To reach mastery of this topic, the following plans are incorporated into lessons 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of my unit plan:
 - Day 1: The first day can include the live stream introducing the topic. Succeeding this, students will participate in a Quizziz activity serving as an anticipatory set for the week. This will provide the students with an interactive preview of the content.
 - Day 2: The teacher demonstrates a simple search on the internet, based on student interest, to model how easily it is to find unreliable information. As a class, we will discuss what makes the material look reliable and if there are any “tell-tale” signs that this may not be supported information. Students will practice searching for teacher-chosen topics to experience the process as well.
 - Day 3: students will engage with the direct instruction of the steps to evaluating a source to determine if it is a credible source. Succeeding the instruction, students will engage with the WebSmarts tool to receive a

concise version of the instruction as a recap. Additionally, they will practice identifying credible sources with the activities included in the cool.

- Day 4: Students will select a topic of their choosing to research for their final assessment. They will research their topic to find a credible source and a non-credible source. These will be used for their final assessment. Students will also receive the guidelines for their final assessment and will begin constructing their final products on the format they have selected.
- Day 5: Students will continue constructing their final assessments.
- What is the relative advantage of using technology(ies) in this lesson?
 - An advantage to using technology to discuss source validity is that the technology makes the content relatable and relevant to the students. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything the students do is on the computer, and any additional information needed for their classes requires internet research. Utilizing technology increases student efficiency in their classes, as well as helps to speed student productivity by limiting time wasted on untrustworthy sites.
- How would you prepare the learning environment?
 - To prepare for this lesson, I would have the appropriate materials already drafted and scheduled in my Google classroom. On the morning of my live stream, I would have an internet search already prepared to demonstrate how easy it is to come across true-looking false information. My direct instruction lesson would be pre-filmed and provided to the students through the Google Classroom. Additionally, I would create a list of topics for students to research as well as a

list of acceptable formats for the students to use to demonstrate their understanding for those that face difficulties.

Phase 3: Post-Instruction Analysis and Revisions

- What strategies and/or instruments would you use to evaluate the success of this lesson in your classroom to determine any needed revisions?
 - I would use a Technology Impact Checklist to objectively assess how the technology influenced the learning in my classroom. A copy of the checklist is provided below. If I find that I spent more time on the accessibility of the technology rather than having students working on it, that resource would need to change. The technology should assist the flow of the lesson and help students further establish their learning about the topic (identifying credible sources); it should not serve as a hindrance or derailment from the ultimate goal.
- Create descriptors for your new lesson (e.g. grade level, content and topic areas, technologies used, ISTE standards, 21st-century learning standards)
 - Grade level: 6 to 12
 - Content/topics: internet safety, research credibility, safe searches, credible sources
 - ISTE standards:
 - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
 - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
 - 21st century standards:
 - Information Literacy - Evaluate information critically and competently.

- ICT Literacy - Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.
- Save your lesson plan with all its descriptors and TTIPP model notes and share with your peers, teacher, and others.

TTIPP Evaluation of Lesson 1

To evaluate the effectiveness of this lesson in addressing the topic of identifying credible sources of information and the integration of technology to teach such content, I would use a Technology Impact Checklist. Using a list like the model below, I will determine if the technology integration in the lesson met or did not meet the objectives by indicating YES or NO to the following statements:

- An outsider (not a member of the classroom) would view the technology activity as a seamless part of the lesson.
 - Response: **YES**
- The reason for using the technology is obvious and apparent to the teacher, the students, and observers.
 - Response: **YES**
- The students are focused on the learning and not the technology.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher can describe how technology is helping a particular student.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher would have difficulty accomplishing the objectives of the lesson if the technology wasn't there.
 - Response: **NO**

- The teacher can easily, quickly, and concisely explain what the technology is supposed to add to the lesson and to student understanding.
 - Response: **YES**
- All students are participating with the technology and are benefitting from it.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher sees the technology as more trouble than it is worth.
 - Response: **NO**
- The teacher has trouble justifying the cost, accessibility, and preparation time in terms of the benefits to the students.
 - Response: **NO**
- The students spend more time trying to make the technology work than actually using it to learn about the topic.
 - Response: **NO**
- The problem that the teacher was trying to address (addressed in the beginning of the lesson) is still present.
 - Response: **YES**

TTIPP Lesson 2

Activity being utilized: FlipGrid

Location (s) in unit: Lessons 2, 13

Phase 1: Analysis of Teaching and Learning

- What is the problem of practice or main content of your topic?

- As a teacher during the pandemic, I've had my student participation decrease as a result of a reliance on Google Meets. Students do not feel comfortable leaving their cameras and microphones on, and as a district policy, teachers cannot mandate that students must utilize either. As a result of this, there is a discrepancy with students attaining the information and showing what they know in a format which they feel most comfortable.
- What are the technology resources that your students, their families, you, and your school could bring as assets to the lesson?
 - My students each have a district-provided laptop. Additionally, internet access is available from the district for any family that does not have internet access at home. At this time, all of my students are able to access the internet on their school device. Additionally, students can utilize the FlipGrid application on their cell phones. It is free and requires internet access.
- What are the technological possibilities for helping to solve the identified problem in practice? Identify the technology(ies) you will integrate into the lesson to ensure that you have the skills and resources you need to solve the problem.
 - To target the concept of providing students with a safe and academically enhancing space to share their work with others, I will focus on modeling. I will incorporate short videos of myself throughout the unit (as directions, examples, reflection points) to model how beneficial it can be to use the technology as an outlet to share what students know.

Phase 2: Design of the Integration Framework

- What are the objectives of the lesson plan?

- For this lesson (lesson 2), students will be able to identify and justify their stance on the topic provided, citing textual evidence to support their claims. Their claims will be based on the article “Can Money Buy Happiness.”
- How will you assess your students’ accomplishment of the objectives?
 - Using a checklist during the lesson and a rubric as a formative assessment, I will gauge if my students understand the article, can identify the two arguments within, can cite textual evidence, and can present their own stance supported by the text.
- What integration strategies will you use in the lesson plan?
 - In this lesson, students utilize FlipGrid as an anticipatory set. Students record short videos of themselves responding to the article “Can Money Buy Happiness.” It is here that students can freely express their opinions regarding the link between wealth and overall happiness. To ensure this works effectively and is beneficial for my learners, I will model using Flipgrid in multiple lessons in the unit. This will provide students with a multisensory introduction to the program. They will be able to observe my use of FlipGrid on live streams and in Google Meets, watch my videos as exemplars, and read my instructions as well as my testimonials about Flipgrid in Google Classroom.
- What is the relative advantage of using technology(ies) in this lesson?
 - An advantage to using this technology is to provide students with a safe and comfortable outlet to verbalize their understanding without the fear of judgment in a whole class setting. Flipgrids can be limited to “teacher’s eyes only” or open for the entire class to view. This allows students the comfort and safety of being able to express themselves and their understanding themselves.

- How would you prepare the learning environment?
 - To prepare for this lesson, I would have the appropriate materials already drafted and scheduled in my Google classroom. On the morning of my live stream, I would have the class FlipGrid already loaded and ready to share. My direct instruction lesson would include modeling step-by-step how to complete a Flipgrid, highlighting all of the features such as microphone-only mode. Additionally, I would provide students with a Youtube tutorial as an additional resource if they have trouble using this new tool.

Phase 3: Post-Instruction Analysis and Revisions

- What strategies and/or instruments would you use to evaluate the success of this lesson in your classroom to determine any needed revisions?
 - I would use a Technology Impact Checklist to objectively assess how the technology influenced the learning in my classroom. A copy of the checklist is provided below. If I find that I spent more time teaching how to use the tool versus how I can use data from students' submissions through the tool, the resource would need to change. Flipgrid is meant to increase student engagement and productivity rather than pose as a distraction from the learning happening.
- Create descriptors for your new lesson (e.g. grade level, content and topic areas, technologies used, ISTE standards, 21st-century learning standards)
 - Grade level: 6 to 8
 - Content/topics: nonfiction article analysis, tracing arguments within a text, citing textual evidence
 - ISTE standards:

- 6C: Students communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively by creating or using a variety of digital objects such as visualizations, models or simulations.
- 6D: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for their intended audiences.
- 21st century standards:
 - Information Literacy - Evaluate information critically and competently.
 - ICT Literacy - Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.
- Save your lesson plan with all its descriptors and TTIPP model notes and share with your peers, teacher, and others.

TTIPP Evaluation of Lesson 2

To evaluate the effectiveness of this lesson in addressing the topic of identifying credible sources of information and the integration of technology to teach such content, I would use a Technology Impact Checklist. Using a list like the model below, I will now determine if the technology integration in the lesson met or did not meet the objectives by indicating YES or NO to the following statements:

- An outsider (not a member of the classroom) would view the technology activity as a seamless part of the lesson.
 - Response: **YES**
- The reason for using the technology is obvious and apparent to the teacher, the students, and observers.
 - Response: **YES**

- The students are focused on the learning and not the technology.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher can describe how technology is helping a particular student.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher would have difficulty accomplishing the objectives of the lesson if the technology wasn't there.
 - Response: **YES** (Given the current classroom observations, yes, I would have difficulty reaching my objectives without an interactive opportunity for students to express themselves while feeling comfortable enough to do so).
- The teacher can easily, quickly, and concisely explain what the technology is supposed to add to the lesson and to student understanding.
 - Response: **YES**
- All students are participating with the technology and are benefitting from it.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher sees the technology as more trouble than it is worth.
 - Response: **NO**
- The teacher has trouble justifying the cost, accessibility, and preparation time in terms of the benefits to the students.
 - Response: **NO**
- The students spend more time trying to make the technology work than actually using it to learn about the topic.
 - Response: **NO**

- The problem that the teacher was trying to address (addressed in the beginning of the lesson) is still present.
 - Response: **YES** (While this can temporarily relieve the struggle for active participation, I do not feel this is the one solution. Therefore, Yes, the problem is still present and requiring a variety of solutions).

TTIPP Lesson 3

Activity being utilized: Padlet

Location in unit: Lessons 19, 20

Phase 1: Analysis of Teaching and Learning

- What is the problem of practice or main content of your topic?
 - I have found that my students seldom use brainstorming and prewriting methods when giving a large, multi-step task to complete. Therefore, this lesson was created to address the need for brainstorming and having a place to collect and organize thoughts and research before working on a project or assessment.
- What are the technology resources that your students, their families, you, and your school could bring as assets to the lesson?
 - My students each have a district-provided laptop. Additionally, internet access is available from the district for any family that does not have internet access at home. At this time, all of my students are able to access the internet on their school device. Additionally, all of my students have access to my Google Classroom, our digital hub for work and information. Students can access Padlet through the link provided in my Google Classroom.

- What are the technological possibilities for helping to solve the identified problem if practice? Identify the technology(ies) you will integrate into the lesson to ensure that you have the skills and resources you need to solve the problem.
 - To target the concept of brainstorming and pre-planning, I would focus on modeling the ways in which the students would benefit from utilizing Padlet to organize their information for their culminating research project. Throughout the unit, I can incorporate Padlet into do now activities and use it as a place to collect and reflect on classroom data. I feel the more interaction the students have with the resource, the more likely they are to take time to use it rather than go straight into the writing process.

Phase 2: Design of the Integration Framework

- What are the objectives of the lesson plan?
 - For this lesson, students will be able to construct a final project for *A Christmas Carol* which clearly defines a connection between Charles Dickens and his purpose in writing *A Christmas Carol*.
- How will you assess your students' accomplishment of the objectives?
 - I will assess my students' accomplishment of the objectives by meeting with students individually in conferencing Google Meets. In these conferences, the students will share their Padlets (via sharing their screen) and will walk me through their planning processes. I will be able to informally assess the students' achievement of the goal and their progress toward addressing the essential question based on their Padlet work provided as well as their conversation regarding their work.

- What integration strategies will you use in the lesson plan?
 - Modeling and incorporating Padlet into many areas of the unit are the best strategies to incorporate this new technology. As reflected in the TTIPP evaluation of this tool below, there are many digital resources that can serve the purpose that I am using Padlet for; however, Padlet offers an organization and sequence of ideas that most digital spaces lack. Therefore, by modeling for the students how to organize my materials and thoughts using Padlet, I can increase student knowledge of the web 2.0 tool as well as increase the buy in from students to utilize the tool for pre-writing activities, rather than rely on something else or no program at all.
- What is the relative advantage of using technology(ies) in this lesson?
 - Padlet can greatly assist my students in slowing down and organizing their thoughts before completing an assessment. From a RACES response to a culminating project at the end of the unit, my students tend to rush through assignments and often miss crucial components of the writing process. By including Padlet into the class norms and expectations, students will become conditioned into a culture of pre-writing and organizing one's thoughts and resources prior to the first draft (or final, for that matter) of any assignment.
- How would you prepare the learning environment?
 - To prepare for this lesson, I would have the appropriate materials already drafted and scheduled in my Google classroom. On the morning of my live stream, I would frequently model my use of Padlet for students to observe the many ways in which it can organize your thoughts and information. My direct instruction

lesson on the tool would be pre-filmed and provided to the students through the Google Classroom. Additionally, I would provide students with a Youtube resource that reviews how to use Padlet as well as the benefits of using it.

Phase 3: Post-Instruction Analysis and Revisions

- What strategies and/or instruments would you use to evaluate the success of this lesson in your classroom to determine any needed revisions?
 - I would use a Technology Impact Checklist to objectively assess how the technology influenced the learning in my classroom. A copy of the checklist is provided below. Similar to the other lessons and tools discussed above, if too much time is spent on convincing my students to use the tool, the tool itself isn't worth our time. The idea of incorporating this resource into my classroom was to help students save themselves more time in the long run by completing the organization and research ahead of time. However, if more time is spent convincing students to simply put something on the document, it becomes more trouble than it is worth. In that instance, other tools such as Jamboard may be better suited for us.
- Create descriptors for your new lesson (e.g. grade level, content and topic areas, technologies used, ISTE standards, 21st-century learning standards)
 - Grade level: 6 to 8
 - Content/topics: author's purpose, citing textual evidence, pre-writing organization, writing process
 - ISTE standards:

- 3B: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
- 3C: Students curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.
- 6B: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
- 21st century standards:
 - Information Literacy - Evaluate information critically and competently.
 - ICT Literacy - Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.
- Save your lesson plan with all its descriptors and TTIPP model notes and share with your peers, teacher, and others.

TTIPP Evaluation of Lesson 3

To evaluate the effectiveness of this lesson in addressing the topic of identifying credible sources of information and the integration of technology to teach such content, I would use a Technology Impact Checklist. Using a list like the model below, I will now determine if the technology integration in the lesson met or did not meet the objectives by indicating YES or NO to the following statements:

- An outsider (not a member of the classroom) would view the technology activity as a seamless part of the lesson.
 - Response: **NO** (Students can organize their padlets however they choose; therefore, all student padlets will look different. That being said, I feel an outsider

would not get a cohesive understanding of the use of the tool due to the differentiated methods being applied by each student).

- The reason for using the technology is obvious and apparent to the teacher, the students, and observers.
 - Response: **NO** (Rather than using Padlet as a way to collect classroom data, we are utilizing it as an organizational tool for prewriting. This method is not necessarily the most common method to utilize for Padlet; we are being innovative and finding new ways to use the technology available to us).
- The students are focused on the learning and not the technology.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher can describe how technology is helping a particular student.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher would have difficulty accomplishing the objectives of the lesson if the technology wasn't there.
 - Response: **NO** (This lesson is possible with other forms of technology, such as Jamboard, and the objectives can be met. However, Padlet lends itself best to the format I am using for my activity).
- The teacher can easily, quickly, and concisely explain what the technology is supposed to add to the lesson and to student understanding.
 - Response: **YES**
- All students are participating with the technology and are benefitting from it.
 - Response: **YES**
- The teacher sees the technology as more trouble than it is worth.

- Response: **NO**
- The teacher has trouble justifying the cost, accessibility, and preparation time in terms of the benefits to the students.
 - Response: **NO**
- The students spend more time trying to make the technology work than actually using it to learn about the topic.
 - Response: **NO**
- The problem that the teacher was trying to address (addressed in the beginning of the lesson) is still present.
 - Response: **YES** (Brainstorming and pre-planning will continue to be a struggle for my students, as many feel that they are unnecessary steps in the writing process. This lesson is helping to make leaps and bounds in the right direction to prove the value of documenting thoughts, ideas, and research before beginning the writing process).

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u. Sickler_MA1_METL50512 - Curriculum Development for Teacher Leaders**Introduction**

As a teacher ending her eighth year in education and fifth year in Hamilton Township, I am fortunate enough to be able to say that I grew up in the town where I currently teach. As a result of such, I have witnessed huge cultural and economic changes in my area from the time when I sat at a desk to now when I instruct from the front of the classroom. These changes affect all areas of our 40-square mile town of Hamilton Township in Mercer County. The school district is composed of seventeen elementary schools from all corners of our town, as well as three middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative school. The economic and cultural changes for members of our town have trickled down to affect our schools. While students are more exposed to the hardships associated with these cultural inequities and economic struggles, the lack of exposure in the texts they read in the classroom ill prepares students for the world

they face on their own outside of school. The curriculum is facilitating a major disservice to its student population in need of diversity representing who they are, the challenges they face, and the stresses they have overcome.

Community Demographics

In 2000, the poverty rate in Hamilton Township was 4.2% of the population, representing 3,600 people. In 2010, the poverty rate was 5.9% of the population, representing 5,200 people. In the most recent census count, the poverty rate was an all time high of 7.9%, identifying that approximately 7,000 people live below the poverty line (“Quickfacts” 2019). Additionally, as of 2019, 2.8% of Hamilton Township was utilizing the food stamp and/or SNAP program as a primary means of feeding families (“Hamilton Township” 2019). While this may seem like a small fraction of a very large town, I see the impact these statistics have on my students daily.

As of 2019, Hamilton Township consisted of 75.2% of citizens identifying as white alone, 15% of citizens identifying as African American alone, 4.4% of citizens identifying as Asian alone, 2.1% identifying as two or more races, 15.8% identifying as Hispanic, and less than 1% of citizens identifying as either Native American/Alaskan or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (“Hamilton Township” 2019). As data will prove in the next section, much has changed since 2019, and that change is very prevalent in our schools.

Target Population Information

The seventh grade enrollment district wide paints a diverse picture for the district. As of 2019-2020, 864 students were enrolled in seventh grade. Of these students, 52% identified as male, 48% identified as female, and less than 1% identified as non-binary/undesignated gender. Economically, 39.5% of the district is labeled as economically disadvantaged. Less than 1% of students in the district during this year were identified as homeless or in a foster care situation

(NJDOE 2020). Culturally, 42% of students during this school year across the district identified as white, 34% identified as Hispanic, 17% identified as African American, 4% identified as Asian, 3% identified as multicultural (representing two or more cultures), and less than 1% identified as Native American/Alaskan and Hawaiian (NJDOE 2020).

As of June 2021, the focus grade for my curriculum in my school represents a diverse population reminiscent of the demographics district wide. I was able to gather data demonstrating such through interviewing one of the two vice principals in my school. Currently, the enrollment of the seventh grade in my school is 307 students; however, in terms of demographics, only 71% of these students provided any identification on their school required forms. Of these 217 students, 6% identified as Asian, 22.6% identified as African American, 55.3% identified as Hispanic, 8.8% identified as white, 6.5% identified as multicultural, and less than 1% identified as either of Native American-Alaskan or Hawaiian descent. As of June 7, 2021, approximately 63% of the student body of my school identified as a student of color, and of that population, 70% were enrolled in our free-and-reduced lunch program (Sickler 2021).

While the data above represents a snapshot of the district as well as my school and seventh grade specifically, the curriculum revisions are geared specifically toward the seventh grade general and inclusion populations. These changes are intended to provide students with necessary learning opportunities to strengthen analysis skills while fostering a global perspective through real world experiences and applications.

Philosophy of Target District

The mission statement of the Hamilton Township School District is concise but impactful, simply focusing on “a quality education for every student.” As identified by the district, this phrase “provides the template for the Teaching and Living Character (TLC)

Education Program to embody its philosophy, “Rooted in Values, Growing in Knowledge,” and its vision to see our students become caring, productive citizens of the world community” (“HTSD” 2021).

This curriculum is focused on adjusting the seventh grade curriculum currently in place to represent the current student body, the changing town demographic, and the social and emotional needs of each student through inquiry and essential questions. To determine these needs and the potential effectiveness of these changes to the curriculum currently in effect, I focused on the seventh grade population at my school, one of the three middle schools located in Hamilton Township. This school’s mission statement, though a tributary to the district’s vision, is more succinct. The statement reads

“The mission of Grice Middle School is to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment that promotes the success of all students as they progress from childhood to adolescence and ultimately become respectable, productive, and responsible citizens of a changing world. We will strive to accomplish this through a challenging and innovative curriculum, a dedicated staff, involved students, supportive parents, and our entire diverse community” (“About Grice” 2021).

In addition, this school’s motto, heard echoing throughout the halls, is “pride plus spirit equals excellence,” representing the two houses of the school.

Curriculum Justification

As the data above illustrates, Hamilton Township is a mosaic of diversity, and to provide the “quality education for every student” it boasts in its philosophy, the literature should reflect the experiences of its students. Students should be afforded the opportunity to see themselves within the characters of the texts they read, and much of the antiquated curriculum utilized today merely represents the students on a surface level, predominantly through generalized skin color. For instance, in Module 1 of the HTSD curriculum guide for grade 7, four of the proposed texts for the storytelling unit incorporate Hispanic characters. Of these characters, only one story

demonstrates a direct representation to a specific background, rather than falling under the “Hispanic” umbrella and neglecting to acknowledge cultural diversity of Hispanic and Latino nations. Only one story in the proposed guide represents students in unstable home situations. Only one text - a set of haiku poems- represents the Asian population, while all texts representing the African American community speak of token figures in the African American community rather than the African American experience. If this district wants to develop students into global thinkers and, as the Grice Middle School mission statement identifies, “responsible citizens of a changing world,” the texts provided to students should represent that changing world to best prepare them for it.

Conclusion

Through the use of essential questions and backwards design, the seventh grade English-Language Arts curriculum will be able to establish the global perspective desperately needed for today’s students. To foster empathy, responsibility, and the qualities of a contributing and caring global citizen, students need to understand a variety of perspectives and experiences. To do so, this curriculum intends on utilizing real world practices and experiences to generate inquiry amongst students. When students are able to place themselves in another’s shoes, it is only then that they can understand the perspective of another, and this curriculum, through diverse texts, engaging learning activities, and guiding essential questions, intends on creating an environment where that is possible for the students of today.

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v. Sickler_MA2_METL50511 - Teacher Leadership & Learning Communities

APA Citation	Summary of Text	Significant Findings	Reflection
Owen, S. (2014). Teacher professional learning communities: Going beyond contrived collegiality toward challenging debate and collegial learning and professional growth. <i>Australian Journal of Adult Learning</i> , 54(2), 54–77.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the article is to examine PLC models and developmental states within the context of three specific schools. • The article followed three top schools in Australia, all of which are part of an international project, to illustrate how PLC's can facilitate collegiality amongst learners and interdependence amongst teachers. • Multiple researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stages themselves are incredibly valuable for a teacher establishing and fostering a functioning PLC, as they identify how to initiate and sustain the PLC through its dissolution. • This source would be beneficial for a teacher leader looking to establish a learning community from the ground up, as the research provided from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although this article did not change my mind on the effectiveness of PLC's, I feel it strengthened my beliefs that a successful PLC becomes successful by working through stages. • Through the

	<p>concluded that the development and sustainability of PLC's is a process with stages, rather than an instantaneous working environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additionally, the article presented numerous research studies regarding the important features of a PLC for it to contribute to student and faculty growth. 	<p>Australia follows three schools from the creation of each PLC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing these examples can assist such teacher leaders in identifying what characteristics are essential for their PLC to begin the planning stages of norms and expectations. 	<p>use of these stages (forming, storming, norming, performing, transforming, dorming, and mourning), groups are able to establish connections, identify common goals, remain task oriented, learn from actions, find ways to prevent burnout, and reflect as the PLC dissolves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I had wished that this article provided a deeper dive into the logistics of each PLC, for things such as the exact norms, approved behavior, and response to conflict, I do feel that the anecdotes regarding
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			<p>the Australian schools helped me to see the true value in putting in the effort in establishing the PLC to see the fruits of the labor later as the PLC functions without hesitation and as student achievement is positively affected.</p>
<p>Lee, S. Y. (2020). Analysis of the Effect of School Organizational Culture and Professional Learning Communities on Teacher Efficacy. <i>Integration of Education</i>, 24(2), 206–217. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.15507/1991-9468.099.024.202002.206-217</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article identifies that school culture has direct and indirect effects on overall school effectiveness. • Through a study with teachers in South Korea, the article examines teacher efficacy, which refers to expectations or beliefs about a teacher's own ability to have a positive impact on students' learning (209). • The goal of the article is to find ways to expand teacher efficacy and personal belief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of structure, the main goal of the professional community is to promote student learning, and the main agent of such learning is the teacher. • It is pivotal for a teacher leader to understand, as the article illustrates, that culture is a huge proponent in school-wide success. • As described in the article, there are many factors that go into establishing a culture for learning, but it is important for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article strengthened my beliefs in the connection between school culture and teacher effectiveness . • The article reinforced my belief that, even with the right measures in place, a PLC at its roots is driven by culture, and if the culture

	systems by examining how teacher efficacy varies according to each school's independent culture and level of PLC.	those developing learning communities to consider that if there is not a change to the atmosphere of the building, the nature of the PLC will be superficial and counterintuitive to the school goal.	of collaborative learning and collaborative growth are absent, the PLC will not impact student learning nor teachers' beliefs that they can positively affect student learning.
Feldman, J. (2020). The role of professional learning communities to support teacher development: A social practice theory perspective. <i>South African Journal of Education</i> , 40(1), 1–8. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.15700/saje.v40n1a1668	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using South Africa and its Department of Basic Education (DBE) as its backdrop and framework, the article breaks down professional learning communities and how they can support teachers' pedagogical practice. • Rather than a focus on the learners, this article focuses exclusively how a functioning PLC improves teachers' knowledge of their content, pedagogy of teaching, and overall effectiveness for school-wide success. • The article relies heavily on the teleoaffective structures in research and practice theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article provides information on teleoaffective structures, which are “a combination of teleological and affective dimensions that relate to the practice of being goal-oriented (teleological orderings) and emotion or intuitive (affective), where the goal is directed by normative views and includes purposes, beliefs, and emotions” (4). • This research would benefit a teacher leader because it focuses on the teacher rather than the student. • Rather than emphasizing the effect (student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article changed my perspective on PLC's by showing me that PLC's provide a greater positive effect on teachers than I had previously surmised. • As a teacher, I am aware that working with others will ultimately improve my classroom strategies by providing me resources, allies with whom to

	<p>as a framework to understand how PLC's impact overall teacher learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This research is then supported by the addition of the practice theory to show that although a teacher's independent actions may appear to just be for one person, they have a much greater impact on the entire group. 	<p>growth), the article breaks down the science behind the cause (the teachers) to illustrate that PLC's have just as much positive influence on teacher pedagogy as they do on student learning.</p>	<p>bounce ideas, and objective eyes that can identify ways to improve that I cannot see.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on teleoaffective structures in comparison to the practice theory changed my perspective and focus on PLC's; each teacher is a carrier of practices, and when placed in the PLC, the practices become a part of an ongoing collaborative dialogue. The work is no longer to benefit just one teacher.
<p>Van Themaat, J. V. L. (2019). Thinking together changes the educational experiences, provision and outcomes for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article reflects on how PLC's support the learning of educators that share the goal of providing the best education possible for special education students (identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teacher leaders would benefit from learning about the "teacher inquiry and knowledge building cycle" (292) introduced through Timperley's research in this article. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I value most from this article is the emphasis the SEND teachers placed on the cycle and the process

<p>SEND pupils – professional learning communities enhancing practice, pedagogy and innovation. <i>Support for Learning</i>, 34(3), 290–311. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1111/1467-9604.12263</p>	<p>in this text as students with SEND, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article provides a different view into participants of PLC's, fostering opening discussions amongst colleagues across schools in a single community. • Additionally, this article is anecdote-rich with examples of how the focus areas demonstrated the learning community propensities from small scale to large to address the needs of the SENDs in that area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It demonstrates how PLC's identify issues and move through processes toward a solution before identifying the next issue to address. This process stepped up the cycle from the four-stage “assess, plan, do, review” that many teacher leaders learned in their undergraduate studies. • While this article was heavy in anecdotes about the schools included which centered the study regarding SENDs and PLC's, there is solid information regarding networking with a common goal in mind. While this may seem redundant to say, it's important to remember that even those outside of one's building but in one's district are resources as well, especially when meeting the needs of a challenging and growing population such as the SEND. 	<p>of issue, inquiry, intervention, innovation, and impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I find myself to be a cyclical thinker, so approaching a problem in my PLC to then follow the cycle provided would appear to be an achievable task for me. The process appears concise but intentional. • While I did not take away as much as I had hoped to, being a teacher of special education students as well as general education students, I valued the stories included in this article to demonstrate how teachers across a community
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			worked for a common goal. This illustrated meeting learning propensities at a larger scale.
<p>Tiong Ngee Derk. (2019). Appraising “professional learning communities” (PLCs) for Malaysian schools through the lens of sociocultural theory: A critical review of literature with implications for research and practice. <i>Malaysian Journal of ELT Research</i>, 16(2), 1–17.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article focuses on the application of PLC’s in the Malaysian context with a focus on sociocultural theory. • The author believes that PLC’s can be a sustainable and viable model for professional learning amid caveats (1). • The article also, interestingly, presents a number of problematic situations in implementing PLC’s into the Malaysian context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The definition of PLC provided from Hord’s research is important for teacher leaders to understand; it includes a “shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning, shared teaching practice, and supportive structural and relational conditions” (3). • It is also valuable to note that this article provided pitfalls to the PLC structure which most articles omit. • The article addresses two common pitfalls to PLCs: the PLC becoming another unsustainable addition to daily duties and that PLCs risk being implemented through “surface-level compliance, without reflecting a deeper understanding of underlying theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I value this article for addressing the downsides to PLC’s that are often spoken in the school setting. This is something that no other article addressed in my research. • The author commented that many teachers may view PLC’s as yet another mindless duty to add to an already overburdened schedule; this, I’ve found, is a common thought in schools where the PLC’s are not effectively

		and processes” (4-5).	<p>run and modeled from upper leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additionally, the second flaw is one that I experience daily: surface-level compliance. When teachers do not feel genuinely invested in the content which the PLC is investigating or aiming to improve, the PLC will go through the motions out of sheer compliance rather than with the aim to help the teachers and students to become better.
<p>Durr, T., Kampmann, J., Hales, P., & Browning, L. (2020). Lessons Learned from Online PLCs of Rural STEM Teachers. <i>Rural Educator</i>,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike the other articles presented in this document, this article addressed online PLC's, a commonplace in 2020. • The article focuses on what lessons had been learned after a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the author took the perspective that rural teachers already feel isolated given their geography, it's important for teacher leaders to address the idea of isolation. • Teaching can often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that this article provided me with many areas to consider when planning my PLC in 2020. Given

<p>41(1), 20–26. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.35608/ruraled.v41i1.555</p>	<p>selection of rural STEM teachers implemented and practiced online PLC's to work toward a common goal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very similar to an in-person PLC, the learning communities described in the article made changes by the third meeting to streamline work and continue working toward a common goal. 	<p>be looked at as an isolated profession; many teachers remain in their classrooms and work independently, so this article has value in focusing on a population that is already “isolated” before the introduction of virtual meetings rather than face-to-face encounters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article provides teacher leaders with a great example of how to establish routine while remotely to ensure that the digital PLC is working toward the common goal. 	<p>the nature of the socially distant school year we are all currently experiencing , it is important to consider how the PLC we create can transfer to that forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article demonstrated that for these PLC's to excel, they needed a high level of structure and repetitive processes; this differs from the flexibility of an in-person meeting in which the agenda can adjust if need is demonstrated. • Even while the structure was modified after meeting 3 (as described on page 23), the
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			<p>expectations and structure remained to continue producing work in the digital setting; this was a great model for me as I continue working through the remote models of meeting in my school.</p>
<p>Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Almarode, J. (2020). Student Learning Communities as Builders of Collective Efficacy. <i>Reading Psychology</i>, 41(6), 559–582. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/02702711.2020.1783139</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although titled “Student Learning Communities,” the authors place a focus on the cooperative learning environment of a school as a whole and address the roles of both students and teachers. • This article is based in the social cognitive theory and its five tenets: “learners learn by observing others, learning is an internal process that may or may not lead to behavioral change, cognitive factors influence motivation as well as learning, learners and their environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limited aspects of this article that would be beneficial to a teacher leader, and that information is similar to research provided in the previous article set in the Malaysian context. • The author quotes Hord’s six features of effective PLC’s; this information would be invaluable as a teacher or practitioner establishes a PLC in a school setting. • These features include “structural conditions, supportive relational conditions, shared values and vision, intentional collective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did not find the majority of this article useful when compared to the resources provided above and below, as much of the writing focused on sociological theories rather than practical applications of methods in a PLC. • While the theories behind PLC’s appear sound, I feel more application

	<p>influence each other, and behavior becomes increasingly regulated” (560).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author provides extensive research on cooperative learning while providing the necessary conditions for successful PLC’s. 	<p>learning, peers supporting peers, and shared and supportive leadership” (564).</p>	<p>information would be needed to consider this a viable source for teacher leaders working to establish PLC’s in their buildings.</p>
<p>Burns, M. K., Naughton, M. R., Preast, J. L., Wang, Z., Gordon, R. L., Robb, V., & Smith, M. L. (2018). Factors of Professional Learning Community Implementation and Effect on Student Achievement. <i>Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation</i>, 28(4), 394–412. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/10474412.2017.1385396</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article focuses on teams working together to implement PLC’s and effect student achievement. • The article questions the effectiveness of PLCs in addressing that empirical research to support the success of these learning communities is “somewhat questionable” (395). • Additionally, the article argues that many studies of PLC’s do not assess student achievement but rather focus on changes made to the teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article presented many interesting articles regarding the effectiveness of PLC’s and the link between them and student achievement. • Unlike many articles above, this source questions the effective nature given that many research studies do not have concrete evidence linking the changes in school structure and culture to student achievement data. • This would be an important item for a teacher leader to address when establishing and fostering a PLC. To determine its effectiveness, as many of the previous articles have stated, there needs to be some kind of objective evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article presented many points that I actually want to investigate further, particularly those related to the Dogan, and Louis/Marks studies (395). • While the author does present positive anecdotes regarding student data and achievement rising in a “PLC school,” not enough concrete data was provided in the article to

		that demonstrates the changes to the norm have been worth the time and effort to make such changes.	<p>make a sufficient case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If anything, this article caused me to question the effectiveness based on the lack of objective data provided.
<p>Muñoz, M. A., & Branham, K. E. (2016). Professional Learning Communities Focusing on Results and Data-Use to Improve Student Learning: The Right Implementation Matters. <i>Planning & Changing</i>, 47(1/2), 37–46.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The authors of this article emphasized that data use and application in the PLC setting will lead teachers to assisting with improved student learning. ● The article placed an emphasis on a “results orientation;” not only should teachers care about getting results, but what they do with the results will dictate how students can improve. ● The use of data is a collaborative process, and as a team, the PLC will apply intervention strategies to ensure student learning and student growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher leaders will greatly benefit from the simple yet profound “Big Ideas” presented that drive the PLC process. These include “learning is our fundamental purpose, we will create a collaborative culture, and we will create a results orientation” (39). ● The emphasis on the “results orientation” directly correlates to what many teachers experience as “data driven instruction;” the end result is as important as the process to get there and helps guide the next steps toward success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a member of my school’s data team and a “data fan” myself, I strongly connected with this article and its connection between data use and student improvement. ● I also found it interesting, having read this article directly after the article above, that the author considered data to be a quintessential detail in the PLC structure. ● I also greatly

			<p>valued the focus on how data was being used to affect change, following methods such as “building high performing, collaborative teams focused on improved student learning, monitoring student learning on a timely basis, and creating systems of interventions to provide students with additional time and support for learning” (40).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data was the backbone of this article, and I connected with it greatly.
<p>Van Lare, M., & Brazer, S. D. (2013). Analyzing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The article, similar to others above, applies theoretical constructs of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many ways, this article combines many of the ideals presented in articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found this article to be repetitive of many

<p>Learning in Professional Learning Communities: A Conceptual Framework. <i>Leadership & Policy in Schools</i>, 12(4), 374–396. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/15700763.2013.860463</p>	<p>sociocultural learning to the idea of PLC's in a school setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horn's data resurfaces to discuss learning processes through collaboration as well as the processes teachers follow when working within communities. 	<p>before it, so this may be less useful to the teacher leader establishing a PLC when compared to the more concise articles above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This article does raise the question of what learning looks like, and I find that beneficial for any teacher to examine, not just the teacher leader or the new PLC. • The answer to the question above would link that new teacher to either data practices, standardized or shared assessments, or common goals amongst members of a PLC. 	<p>concepts identified in the articles above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That being said, the article presented one question within one of its early sections that resonated with me: <i>what counts as learning, and how do we know when we see it?</i> • Although this question wasn't emphasized in more than one paragraph on one page, I continually revised the question while reading the article to consider the objective nature of working in a PLC. • Too often, teachers present data from their classrooms on a specific standard, but
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			<p>that information is difficult to compare with grade-level counterparts because achievement of a standard may look different for every teacher and for every student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● My take-away from this article was the importance of developing a collaborative , uniform system of collecting, scoring, and analyzing data to determine student achievement when in my PLC.● All perspectives are important; however, when it comes to the data, we as a group will need to create a
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			<p>unanimous system so that we, together, can determine what learning looks like to us and how we will know it when we see it.</p>
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w. Sickler_MA2_METL50516 - Analyzing Teacher Classroom Behavior

Maintaining Momentum

- Focus and Attention When Beginning Lessons
 - In this step, the teacher is able to get the attention of all learners using a standard signal before progressing forward in the lesson. The teacher should allow the signal to take effect before progressing into an overview that “provides motivation and a learning setting describing what will be done” (Good & Lavigne, 2018, p. 139). It’s important to have some type of visual cue from the students to assure that the teacher has their attention before continuing on through the instruction.
 - There are many ways in which a teacher can grasp the attention of all learners. However, in doing so, the teacher must recognize and honor the students’ dignity in the process. For the majority of my career, I have identified my students as “ladies and gents.” “Boys and girls” had always seemed too childish for me, and I

always felt that “ladies and gents” treated the students as teenagers while showing them respect. This is the first year in which I have students that identify as non-binary or questioning and identify with the pronouns they/them. Therefore, “ladies and gents,” while kind and age appropriate, does not include all of my students and is not an appropriate way to get the attention of my learners. I have since adjusted my introductory phrases to “Good morning, FamJam” or “Okay, family, let’s take a look at...” instead to include all of my diverse learners in my attention grabber.

- Keep Lessons Moving at a Good Pace
 - This section emphasized that while teachers often do a great job at getting attention, they often lose the momentum of the lesson by spending too much time on minor details and not enough time on major content. Additionally, teachers often lose the momentum by causing all students to wait while every student responds to a question.
 - “In many instances this year, we (my co-teacher, aide, and I) have seen that, of twenty-four students, five will rush through the assignment under ten minutes, eight to ten students put genuine and independent effort into their work, about five students will work with minimal scaffolding, and four will need extensive, one-on-one assistance. When looking at those numbers, how does one move forward with their plans without addressing the discrepancy?” questioned Mrs. Rosina Tufano, seventh and eighth grade ELA inclusion teacher (Sickler, 2020). In speaking with Mrs. Tufano, we discussed how our students represent a wide range of learning abilities, and this has posed challenges when assigning independent

work in our classrooms. To address this issue, Mrs. Tufano has begun to pull students typically identified as those in need of extensive intervention into a Google Meet upon the completion of the daily agenda and directions. This has not completely alleviated the discrepancy; however, as Mrs. Tufano stated, “Any intervention work in a small group helps to bridge the gap between the learners in the class” (Sickler, 2020).

- Monitor Attention during Lessons
 - This section focuses on collecting informal data to gauge student attention throughout the lesson. Students are more likely to put their best effort into staying engaged when they feel they are being consistently monitored for their engagement. It is also essential for teachers to look for and to be able to identify verbal and nonverbal signs of confusion or difficulty.
 - It is important to recognize that students typically do not feel comfortable admitting that they do not understand something. In the COVID-19 digital era, it has become easier for students to utilize individual channels, such as the chat feature on Go-Guardian, to address the teacher directly to express misunderstandings. However, within the typical classroom setting, those conversations seldom take place. In my previous experiences, I have observed students drawing, putting their heads down, and acting out, all as different signals for me to know that they are frustrated they do not understand what to do. As time progresses and as teachers become more acquainted with their learners, it is essential to look for signs of misunderstanding. In addition, what has always been beneficial to me is to act proactively and create symbols of confusion with

students. Therefore, when they utilize the symbol that we have created together, it is a clue to me - and me alone - that they need further instruction to be successful.

- Stimulate Attention Periodically
 - Although structure is a hugely helpful tool in a classroom, predictability can produce an adverse effect than intended. When things become too routine and too predictable, student minds can often wander and become more distracted. To prevent this, teachers can vary their questioning, alter the volume of their voice throughout instruction, and vary activities to include both independent and collaborative responses. When a teacher ventures into incorporating new things, such as new questions or approaches material in a new way, they can stimulate interest amongst learners at a higher level.
 - When Mrs. Tufano and I transitioned to this section of managing student and lesson momentum, she instantly reflected back to last year during a read-aloud of The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963. “It was my first time reading the novel in seventh grade, and out of nowhere, my co-teacher busted out a loud, thick, DEEP southern accent to portray a character, and it took us all by surprise. After the initial laughs of the students, it was clear that she had them hooked. Her use of accents, tone, and willingness to go the extra mile left the students wanting more. It left ME wanting more!” (Sickler, 2020). As we had continued our discussion, it was clear that the students remained engaged throughout the reading of that novel because of the teacher’s choice to modulate her tone, increase and decrease her volume, and apply accents to represent the characters. They hadn’t known what

was coming next, and it was an effective strategy in keeping the students engaged while approaching new content in the novel.

- Maintain Accountability
 - This section, in my opinion, is the most important in maintaining lesson momentum. First, it is important to remind students that all of their work matters. Although not every assignment may end up in the gradebook, the students are responsible for learning the material. Statements such as “I may be calling on students at any time” is a quick technique to avoid predictability but should not be used to incite student embarrassment, especially for inattentive students. What I value most about this section is how to monitor assertive students while addressing more reticent students. A log book to track students’ rate of success of handling certain styles of questions is one suggestion to monitor student participation and engagement with the material. This section also addressed wait time after asking a question to provide all students with the opportunity to have a voice and to formulate their thoughts.
 - One area I struggle with this year, remotely in particular, is how to encourage my more reluctant speakers to engage without discouraging those that are frequently vocal. I have utilized the chat feature in Google Meet as well as asked independent questions to students on Go-Guardian. I have yet to find my niche in terms of harnessing my abrasively vocal students to provide others an opportunity to speak. The log book idea, I feel, is a good start for me to record the number of times students are able to engage in the hopes of making positive changes.
- Terminate Lessons That Have Gone On Too Long

- This section stressed the importance of knowing when a lesson should be cut off to maintain the integrity of the lesson and the learning. When lessons drag on longer than they should, more time is spent trying to get students' attention rather than focusing on students' understanding about the material. This is often a result of focusing heavily on a pacing guide and sticking to the regimented time rather than adjusting instructionally for the needs of the current students.
- While pacing guides do provide an outline for a general timeline of instruction, time spent on a task is relative to the learners in the classroom. In a case study conducted on the effects of a geometry pacing guide on teacher instruction in the Midwestern School District, data proved that although the students were encountering the material, they were not necessarily included to complete the proof tasks (the material taught) on homework and that students may face difficulties with proving as time goes on (Sears, 2018, p.176). From this research, it was concluded that because of the time restraints placed on teachers as a result of the pacing guide, teachers were challenged to move on and meet other objectives to keep pace with the guide. In doing so, they had to make a choice over increasing time needed for students to understand proofs; instead, teachers accepted that students "generally avoid providing for homework assignments" and continued moving forward in the curriculum" (Sears, 2018, p.176). As a result of sticking to the pacing guide instead of the needs of the learners, the teachers in the case study above actively acknowledge that their students will continue to struggle with the previous task. As teachers, we have the opportunity

to adjust our timelines based on the needs of those in our classrooms and should do so before moving forward.

Student Behaviors

- Showing off
 - Some students continually seek the attention of their teacher or peers for acceptance, to impress them, or to entertain them. Often, these behaviors can be interpreted as disruptive to the learning process. To address this, it is important to give the students participating in these behaviors the attention they seek but only for appropriate behavior. Rather than engaging in the negative behaviors and drawing negative attention to the student, encourage the student to engage in positive behaviors in a manner that protects their dignity.
 - For students who often show off, I struggle with finding a balance between acknowledging their willingness to participate and ignoring their negative behavior of steamrolling other students to the answers. During in-person instruction, I have addressed my over-sharers by providing them with different leadership tasks in the classroom so that they feel valued and important while I provide other students the opportunity to share their understandings with me. This has proven to be ineffective during remote learning. Often, I find myself needing to mute students in a Google Meet, and while that quiets them for the moment, I fear that it will have a long term effect of deterring them from sharing in class.
- Unresponsiveness
 - Students choose to be unresponsive for a variety of reasons, but the most common tends to be lacking a level of confidence or understanding that hinders the student

from sharing or participating. It is important to foster an environment that encourages the student while still creates a strong expectation. Asking direct questions of the student while accompanying questions with appropriate gestures of expecting an answer will encourage the student to say something. If an answer is provided, reinforce the student by building them up while using their material in the lesson. Allow students to identify when they do not know, because saying “i don’t know” is a form of addressing their level of understanding. In doing so, “you make it possible for students to respond verbally even when they do not know the answer” (Good & Lavigne, 2018, p.173).

- In my classroom, I do sporadically call on students when on a Google Meet to gain their perspective. If faced with an “I don’t know,” I let the student know that I will give them time to think but will be coming back to them for their thoughts. Instead of addressing them again in front of the entire class, I then utilize a one-on-one method, such as the Go-Guardian chat, to have that intimate conversation with the student. I’ve found that in following up this way, sharing has become less threatening, and students are more apt to work through their “I don’t know” with me.
- Failure to complete assignments
 - When students do not turn in their assignments, teachers need to evaluate if students understand how to complete the work. A common observation, as provided by Good and Lavigne’s research, is that “teachers often not only fail to provide help but also routinely collect seatwork before students can finish it” (2018, p. 173). Patience and scaffolding is needed when working with students

that show these academic struggles. Additionally, there are students that are capable of the work but do not finish or turn it in. This can be addressed by creating and enforcing clear expectations from the beginning of the year regarding what gets turned in when and the consequences for missing deadlines.

- In my classroom this year, I have adjusted my classroom policies to afford my students, now learning completely remotely for the next two months, the opportunity to revise and resubmit any work that has earned a 69% or lower when graded. While this has proven to be beneficial for many, I have observed a portion of my student population that will rush through an assignment right before a deadline knowing they have a second opportunity for a better grade. Other students have chosen to not complete assignments, such as summative assessments, knowing that the district policy is that students may not receive lower than a 65%. Moving forward, a change I can make to alleviate these issues is to clearly express the connection between the assignments and student learning so that the students understand the purpose of the task and in practicing the material in that format.
- Attention deficits
 - Attentional distractibility and behavioral hyperactivity are two common student behaviors that can impair a student's ability to learn. These struggles can directly impact study habits, productivity on assignments, and organization. For students with attention deficits, they often face difficulty listening, tend to be forgetful, and are observed to have careless task completion when intellectually they are capable of the work.

- For my students struggling with ADD, I can provide them with a strong structural foundation and set of routines, paired with an agenda or checklist. If a student were to veer off course, they will always have a guide to return to to complete their work. This would be paired with frequent checks for understanding, both verbal and nonverbal, as well as the use of proximity and other accommodations to ensure the student is able to achieve their best.
- Hyperactivity
 - Students with hyperactivity often demonstrate impulse control and can be observed interrupting others, being unable to wait for their turn, and are in a constant state of motion. Often, students with hyperactivity typically cannot maintain normal attention and self regulation for more than a short period of time.
 - What I have found effective in my classroom is discussing hyperactive behaviors privately with my ADHD students. I have in the past asked my students to describe the feeling they get during their outbursts of energy; additionally, we discuss ways we can partner in coping through these challenges in my class. In previous years, students have utilized squishy balls, standing desks, and have taken laps around the perimeter of my classroom to exert excess energy so as to maintain their focus on the learning in my classroom. The students and I work together to find a coping mechanism that works best for both of us, and we proceed as a trial and error period to find the right fit.
- Defiance
 - Although teachers may believe differently in the heat of the moment, students are defiant for a reason, and it is important to make sure the defiant student is heard.

Students are often defiant toward teachers that they resent for some reason, so to fully understand the motivation behind the behavior, teachers should provide these students with an opportunity to share their point of view. Often, students become defiant after perceiving that they were unfairly treated. When engaging with a defiant student, teachers should approach the conversation calmly, openly, and should remember their position. Teachers are to assist students in growing academically, socially, and emotionally, so the conversation can become a learning experience for that student.

- In my classroom, I have often asked students who were being outwardly defiant to step into the hallway and wait for me. This allows both of us to have a second to cool down and clear our heads. I then would stand or sit next to the student in the hallway and ask them, “What’s going on?” so as to spark a casual yet meaningful conversation. Often, these moments of defiance are fueled by a misunderstanding or something that had occurred previously in the day and perpetuated in my class. While working with my new set of students remotely, I can practice this same method. What would have been a conversation in the hallway can be a discussion in a breakout room or on Go-Guardian. The important thing for me to remember is to allow the student to speak freely and to let them know that at this moment, my full attention is on them and on finding a way to help them feel better in my classroom.

- Aggression

- Teachers’ responsibility when engaging with aggressive students is crucial. Students must not be allowed to harm themselves, others, or property, and if any

of these are committed, the proper protocols, as outlined by administration, must be followed to ensure the safety of the student and others while addressing the negative behaviors. This section discussed how a teacher should respond when a student becomes aggressive and needs to be restrained or engages in a fight. As the teacher, it is important to focus on the welfare of the students involved and to take a calming stance in the matter so as to not perpetuate the situation. Once the student has calmed, provide them the opportunity to discuss their feelings, what resulted in their behaviors, how they feel about their behaviors, and how they feel about the entire situation.

- The most important thing that I can do if placed in a situation with an aggressive student is to reinforce that I am here for them. I care about them. It is equally as important to let the student vocalize their feelings when appropriate, to discuss why they felt their actions were just, and to plan with me how we could approach a similar situation in the future should one arise. When appropriate, I need to make my student understand that their feelings are validated and matter, and together we will work to find safer coping strategies to deal with negative emotions that will not put themselves, their peers, or property at risk.

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x. Sickler_MA3_METL50511 - Teacher Leadership & Learning Communities

Introduction

Prior to my time spent in this course, my early career experiences taught me that a PLC is something that should be established due to a schedule and can be facilitated in the Wawa deli line during lunch. Agendas were merely suggestions, and so long as someone took adequate-looking notes, the group was in “the clear.” It was both challenging and refreshing to refocus myself in terms of PLCs by starting at the planning stage and establishing a PLC of my own. I knew from the first chapter of our textbook and the identification of a PLC as “a group of educators (teachers, administrators, consultants, support staff, and/or parents) who focus their work on the formal study of instructional practices in order to improve their students’ learning” (Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2020, p. 6) that my previous experiences with PLCs were

about to be dismantled. This definition laid the foundation for my group's Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric and collaborative understanding of what is most important in a PLC. Through our discussions and work together, most of those attributes quickly became what I found to be the most important values of a PLC.

Understanding and Applying the Stages of a PLC

At their core, PLCs are focused on the students, driven by growth, and fueled by educators that are passionate about the work at hand. DuFour and Eaker describe them best in that PLCs have a “shared mission, vision, and values” (Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2020, p. 7). Teachers within a PLC need to share common ground with one another. We, as teachers, all enter new situations with experiences, biases, and goals for our students, of course, but at the heart of what we do and at the heart of a successful PLC, we need to determine a common mission. *What do we hope to achieve? How can we get there together? How can our students thrive as a result of our work?* This goal setting occurs in the preparation stage of a PLC before the PLC even comes to fruition. The work must be driven by a single focus derived from the members of the PLC. This is something I hadn't encountered until my work in Group 3. I hadn't yet fully experienced throughout my eight years of teaching, a group of educators that had organized seamlessly with the same goal, intentions, and focus in mind to produce a positive result for a school culture.

In conjunction with sharing a vision, it is pivotal for teachers in a PLC to deprivatize their classrooms for the benefit of the PLC. Tiong Ngee Derk (2019) identified that keeping classroom doors closed while PLCs are “open” is one of the biggest caveats to functioning PLCs and ultimately distances members from the goal of collaborating for success. As stated above, all teachers enter PLCs with their varied experiences in tow. This practical knowledge of

pedagogical skills for student achievement is invaluable when working in a collaborative setting. However, all too often teachers close their doors for fear of judgment or competition and choose to withhold these skills from benefitting the whole group. When teachers are apt to share what they know, given the buy-in to this PLC norm, established at the foundation, and commitment to the goal created, teachers then become vessels of knowledge to assist one another rather than competitors in a no-win situation. I was fortunate enough to experience such willingness while working in my PLC, and this modeled for me the importance of being willing to let the proverbial walls down and share all that we have with one another in the hopes of reaching success together at whatever goal is set.

The most valued attribute of a PLC is near and dear to my heart: the need to be data driven. When Van Lare had questioned, “What counts as learning, and how do we know it when we see it?” (Van Lare, 2013, p.377) I instantly connected the idea of data driven instruction and having concrete evidence of the success of the students. Learning looks different to every teacher and in every classroom. For instance, my current supervisor provided all English teachers with a benchmark to administer and asked teachers to score such writing on a 0-1-2-3 scale. Following the administration and scoring of the benchmarks, she proceeded to state that one teacher is “harder” than another, ignoring the differences in student populations and what each teacher was aiming to see from her students in their writing. To determine if a goal is being met, such as if the seventh grade can adequately write based on a specific standard, PLC members need to establish an objective way to determine a student’s level of achievement and understanding of a task at hand to gage the growth being made as a result of the PLC implications. This objective analysis will lend itself to the cross curricular nature of PLCs, making growth and achievement

relative to all subject areas and in all classrooms. I find this inclusivity and team focus important for all stakeholders to help one another reach the established goals.

Personal and Professional Goals

This course resulted in my analysis of my strongest and weakest attributes as both an educator and a member of a PLC, and the act of reflection, in and of itself, soon became one of my greatest strengths. The Educational Reform and Professional Learning Community Rubric in particular forced me to evaluate my priorities as a teacher leader. I was soon reminded that I believe there is strong value in looking back to move forward. As teachers, as well as members of a PLC, we need to reflect upon our successes and failures to adjust our course for our next group of students or next challenge to be faced. If we remain stagnant, there will come a time, potentially in the near future, as technology dictates the changes in education, that our old practices and mindset will become obsolete and inappropriate for our learners. This course, through discussion board posts as well as my collaborative work with Group 3, brought out and strengthened my reflective practices and desire to analyze where I am to determine where I would like to go as well as the methods I possess to get there.

Professional Growth

In reflecting upon my achievements in this course, I feel that I excelled at linking my experiences to the course material to derive value in the aspects of a PLC. As previously addressed, I strengthened my reflective thinking as a result of this course, and I feel that my connections made between the course topics and my seventh grade classroom improved my discussion board writing as well as my group contributions.

In reviewing my work from METL50511, I feel I can improve upon my analysis of scholarly sources and the application of such sources into my reflections. Often, I rely on my

experience or the text independently. Assignments such as MA2 and this reflection have reminded me of how my analyses can strengthen by using a source as a starting point, much like what I instruct my students in class, to steer my independent thoughts. The text is available to support me. Additionally, I feel that I have room for improvement in my confidence in my experience and beliefs regarding PLCs. Often, I can be the cause of my own demise through overthinking and overanalysis, thus resulting in work that may not be true of myself. As many of my students experience, I allowed my anxieties and insecurities overshadow my achievements, thus causing myself more discomfort through assignments that were not timely and not up to my own expectations.

As a result of this course, I have taken note of how I interact with my colleagues on a daily basis. I've tallied the number of times co-workers enter my room for social reasons as compared to pedagogical inquiries or collaborative assistance. I've noted how teachers interact throughout the halls and with students in other classes. This course has made me hyper aware of the culture of my building, especially during an uncertain time such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This course afforded me the opportunity to evaluate the culture in my building and discuss it with many of my colleagues including my vice principal. We've discussed at length how teachers have the agency to foster culture so long as they choose to use it effectively. Our discussion reminded me of a rather famous Stan Lee quote: "With great power comes great responsibility." Teachers have the power and resources available to make a monumental difference in their surroundings. They just need to act. Our final rubric was intended to present a plan to create PLCs to then foster CLCs. However, in my mind, I feel that this culture change can begin within the classroom and work backwards. If students are willing to buy-in, to commit,

and to make a classroom into a community, that attitude can spread far greater, in my opinion, than what the adults can foster alone.

Conclusion

The analyses of PLCs, the stages, and the research behind them led me to reflect upon what values matter most to me within my classroom and school community. While this course may be in its closure state, my work with PLCs and CLCs is far from over. I anticipate carrying these experiences and knowledge gained with me as I move forward in my Teacher Leadership career and with the hope of continuing to have a positive impact on my school culture and community.

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y. Sickler_MA3_METL50512 - Curriculum Development for Teacher Leaders

Introduction

Through work with *Curriculum 21* by Heidi Hayes Jacobs, it is clear that education has made many progressive moves in the field of curriculum development. Over the past few decades, we have seen a cultural, philosophical, and economic shift as a result of the shifting global landscape. As a result of these global changes, education experienced paradigm shifts as well. When considering how curriculum development has changed to meet the needs of today's world, we can focus on the increase in authenticity and authentic learning, the implementation of technology to expand learning, and the local and global perspective to foster sustainability.

Authenticity

Jacobs addresses that one of the most important signs of progress in curriculum development is preparing students for the future and adapting to the current times. She supports a curriculum which represents the current students and climate of the classroom, the community, and the world. However, this mindset has not always been widely accepted in education. This breaks from the previous mentalities of maintaining the status quo of the behavioral learning theory of the 19th century. Early in American education, curriculum writing was structured similar to the factory-style businesses of the early twentieth century. Everything was regimented, structured, and focused on the validity of the product rather than the process, and if something wasn't considered "broken", there was nothing about the method that needed to be fixed. This approach emphasized objectives and related activities to "coincide with predetermined student needs" (Ornstein, 2017). More often than not, if a learning activity or assessment were deemed appropriate, they would not be changed regardless of the students being taught, resulting in curriculums that would surpass years before being revised. Jacobs challenges this in an effort to further establish authenticity by stating, "I propose that each teacher commit to a replacement and then deliberately upgrade at least one assessment type per semester" (2010) to work to address the current landscape of the classroom and break from what had been done before.

The work being done across education today shatters the mold of the early twentieth century by placing importance on process over product. Jacobs highlights states such as New Jersey for their progressive and specific curricular frameworks and standards to prepare students for future careers, including goals such as "identify(ing) salient interdisciplinary linkages for real-world applications" (2010). This movement toward preparing for tomorrow rather than staying fixed in the achievement of today has made learning more authentic for our students. The work being done in classrooms each day is designed for the students in those desks, in that

classroom, on that day, and during that calendar year. As a result, learning activities are innately more genuine, resulting in increased retention of material, application of material, and overall student growth. A challenge to this remains the need for constant reinvention to address all student needs; however, the process of reflection and revision will ensure that the learning taking place is the most beneficial for the students in the classroom. The modern shifts in education prove that “the good old days” may have been good at one time, but education has proven time and again that change is often for the better.

Technology Integration

Technology has played a pivotal role in education during the 21st century. Providing opportunities for students to expand their knowledge beyond the textbook and expand their reach beyond the world they see in front of them has strengthened educational practices in all subject areas. As knowledge and accessibility to technology increased, educators were challenged regarding how to apply such technology in their classrooms and curriculums. Trends appeared throughout the decade representing ways to authentically incorporate technology into learning, the most prevalent of which being social production.

In previous years, reliance had been placed on the internet solely for information as if it solely served as a quicker way to access information than traveling to the local library. In today's curriculum development, the internet is no longer looked at as the expert source but rather a collection of creators sharing information, and our students contribute to that collection. This change is a shift into "participatory culture, meaning learning takes on a more active role than a traditional passive role" (Jacobs 2010). Students' relationships with the internet establish that they are contributors as much as they are viewers. To meet such a challenge and change, the development and implementation of the digital literacy curriculum as well as the ISTE

technology standards provides a framework for teaching how to use technology appropriately and safely both in the classroom as well as outside of the school setting.

Sustainability

Similar to the application of new technology, placing a focus on the local and global environments within the classroom setting has changed the ways in which curriculums are developed for the better. Jacobs begins to address this in her seven tenets for updating curriculum content, of which she includes developing a global perspective. It is imperative for students to understand that they are a part of a global learning community and are one member of many learners that can both negatively and positively impact the world around them. When looking at our place in the world, it's safe to conclude that "what we do affects others, and the actions of others affect us" (Jacobs, 2010). It is essential that this message be taught to the students of today to inform their decisions for the present as well as the future.

Unlike decades prior, educators today are viewing the students as members of their classrooms as well as members of the global community. The increase in reliance on other cultures as well as interactions with other cultures has increased the need for adopting a global perspective when both teaching and learning. Domestic and international issues are no longer singular entities but rather intersect more often in today's society, such as the world's response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Countries rely on one another for resources as well as aid in determining steps for the future. Therefore, it's imperative to emphasize a global perspective and understanding within the classroom as well as foster global competency. This skill set includes "knowledge of other world regions, cultures, economies, and global issues; skills to communicate in languages other than English, to work in cross-cultural teams, and to assess information from different sources around the world; and values of respect for other cultures and

the disposition to engage responsibly as an actor in the global context" (Jacobs 2010). By not adjusting curricula to provide opportunities for students to develop these skills, teachers are not adequately preparing students for the challenges and experiences they will face in their futures.

Sustainability also spans from evaluating the needs of the school and district community. When developing curriculums, educators need to consider the student population: the varying demographics, the socioeconomic backgrounds, the languages, the social and emotional needs, and essentially what barriers could stand in the way of the students becoming better citizens in their communities. To achieve this end, establishing connections with community organizations, fostering relationships with families, and providing resources to those in need models the mentality that Stewart had previously addressed. Sustainability, cultural preservation, protecting local environments, and ensuring a sense of place and community all contribute to the global perspective, a necessary comment in all curriculums for all subjects.

Conclusion

As the world continues to change, education has, in many ways, joined the ride and has adapted over decades to reflect the world around it. From shifting educational theories and learning philosophies to the integration and use of new technologies, learning has continued to be a fluid process. Additionally, as curriculums continue to reflect sustainability and a concern for maintaining an ecological balance with the world, learning becomes more relevant to the students of today and thus more meaningful. With care placed on the whole student, the changing times, and the need to give back to the environment and global community, it is clear that curriculum development is headed in the right direction as we progress through the next decade.

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z. Sickler_MajorAssignment1_LDTC18510 - Applied Learning Theories

“No Theory is an Island”

Introduction

At the beginning of each school year, my principal encourages teachers to engage with students, learn about them, and build rapport. To do so, he always disseminates a multiple intelligence survey, as well as a VARK learner survey, to present to the students to “figure out how they like to learn.” While this may give a snapshot into the student perspective, recent research and application has proven that there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to learning. To elaborate, students are not exclusively one type of learner but rather possess a gradient learning style. Students adjust their learning styles to the given situation. Additionally, students

apply different aspects of different theories of learning to develop their own outlook and perspective toward learning. I find this to be true of teachers and learning theories as well.

When I was a student in the district of which I currently work, I loved learning. I believed learning was everything. I was a student, and my job was to absorb every ounce of knowledge passed along from the masters: my teachers. I was a poster child for perennialist America believing that, if what we were intended to learn has existed as long as it had, there must be an important reason for the information being taught. Even as a high school student, I believed in the idea that history's finest thinkers and writers had so much to offer me, Meghan, a simple girl from Central New Jersey.

As I look back on those experiences today, as Ms. Sickler, a middle school teacher in Central New Jersey, my approach to learning has changed with experience. While I believe that teachers are in fact masters of their content and students should follow suit in absorbing what we as educators have to offer, there are many times in which the students' innate desire to question and explore leads learning to a better place than we could ever imagine. There are times in which competition or incentivization can kick start an entire movement, let alone a novel or short story. Although students can learn an incredible amount from me, an invaluable resource within the four walls of my classroom lies within peer collaboration and modeling. While learning for learning's sake is still a beautiful concept and a cherished memory, so much more encompasses what I believe to be true about learning.

As the aforementioned student learning style example illustrated, no theory is an island that stands alone. We as teachers face different challenges throughout our careers that bring forth our beliefs regarding thinking and learning and processing information that may not always be as evident on a daily basis. There are times in which teaching Shakespeare in my class is solely

relevant because Shakespeare's name exists on the list of great books that exemplify the foundations of Western culture. This is considered something the student should be exposed to during their time of public education because it broadens their horizons simply having been written by one of the greats. On the other hand, I would be remiss to ignore the validity of teaching Langston Hughes's "Dreams" as an incentive for students to develop an understanding of how the Harlem Renaissance poem is a parallel to the lyrics of Tupac Shakur's "The Rose that Grew from Concrete." Within this fictitious unit alone exists the remnants of perennialism and social cognitive theory, the positive reinforcement of behaviorism and the inquiry process of constructivism. If my outlook on the connective nature of learning theories has displayed anything, it is my belief that no theory is an island, and I myself consist of multiple pieces that makes my educational outlook whole.

The Pieces of the Whole

A large piece of my learning theory resides in constructivism, and that has resulted from my experiences working in the school I had attended as a teen. In my teenage years, textbooks drove the curriculum, but I never found fault in that as they were as rich in creativity as they were historically relevant. Teachers lectured from their podiums, students listened, notes were taken, tests were administered, and the ebb and flow of the daily essentialist learning followed the same process year after year. I did well as a student, but I can't say that I enjoyed how I learned as much as what I had learned. Antiquated systems do not necessarily rise to meet modern challenges, so a shift occurred, led by student data and national educational law, that brought me to today's constructivist approach to testing, learning, and student achievement. With the enactment of ESSA in 2016, we as a building became more focused on the "how" of learning rather than the "what." We believed, as I do to this day, that skill mastery is far more valuable

than content mastery in the sense of being able to approach any challenge and understand how to face it. Today, a greater emphasis is placed on the learning experience and less on how many stories have been read or how many pages of homework had been assigned. I increase collaborative learning opportunities to allow for social learning. I continue to strengthen my questioning and teach the students that not all questions have one correct answer to further validate their independent thought. The “how” continues to outweigh the “what.”

Behaviorist roots are particularly visible during writing instruction. I’ve always viewed writing instruction to be similar to that of mathematics: structured, systematic, and procedural at best. I teach our school-wide constructed response format in the process of associative shifting, expressing to students that the response continues to grow as the stimulus changes. In the instance of writing, as I add a new sentence or paragraph to my essay, my response continues to grow in length and validity. The process continues with slight changes to the equation, and that is what establishes the continuity of the writing format. In addition to this systematic approach to the writing process, my class is rooted in observation, trial, and error. There is nothing assigned that I do not demonstrate, and there is nothing graded that has not been modeled. I afford the students the opportunity to see me write, and while it is very perennialist of me to consider myself the master, I aim to provide my students a visual representation of the writing process for both assistance and comfort. They observe me apply transitions to each of my paragraphs while struggling to find the right phrase to link my ideas. When something doesn’t go as planned, students bear witness to the regrouping and redirection, illustrating that sometimes a new pathway is needed to reach one’s goals for their writing. The effort being placed into trying, failing, and trying again marks the presence of developing writers, and in my class, we do just that.

Turning Theories into Practice

Having a perennialist background with constructivist and behaviorist practices has led to the establishment of quite a unique middle school classroom. However, the diversity in theory usage has helped to develop a classroom that places value in the knowledge of the teacher, the willingness of the student, the benefit of working with peers, and the need to consistently try, try, and try again.

As I move forward into my ninth year of teaching and third year of teaching during a global pandemic, these roots must hold strong in order for my classroom to thrive as it has always. When approaching the R.A.C.E.S. format, I must take everything one step at a time. Before students can feel confident with the entire process, they must feel that they achieved each individual task. The R at the beginning of the format stands for “restate the question,” so before I expect my students to do so, we need to identify what makes a question. What terms are keywords for us to know which words to keep and which to eliminate? How do we restate a two part question? How do our R’s look different for the different types of questions we face? By instituting whole group, peer, and individual practice, students will gain confidence in their abilities to complete the task. Once achieved, students can begin progressing to the A, or “answering the question.” As the students gain mastery of each letter, I will build upon the writing format to incorporate the new task, ultimately leading up to a full R.A.C.E.S. paragraph. The same process can be practiced when introducing the Note and Note Signposts for annotations, both fiction and nonfiction, the structure of an essay, and the components of a plot diagram for sequencing of events. The average attention span of a middle school student is approximately ten minutes, so by incrementalization, repetition, and building upon successes,

students will maintain confidence and convert the concept into a long term memory tool to be revisited throughout the year.

Reading instruction, unlike writing, results in independent thought driven by broad essential questions that connect to both the text as well as the students' lives. Students need to have some way to connect with a text to gain a willingness to explore, draw connections, and extend learning beyond the curriculum. Presenting students with an essential question without context allows them to wonder, something that I feel is lost within the rigid, standardized classrooms around the country. Permitting students to wonder and question allows them to predict, hypothesize, make inferences, draw conclusions, and anticipate what is to come. Inquiry questions are an essential way to begin a unit of study because they lay the foundation for the students. They also create discussion opportunities with the students through socratic seminars, Parlays, or simple turn-and-talks or think-pair-shares within the classroom. Hexagonal thinking and drawing connections between characters, texts, and themes shows that a student's wonder and curiosity, though not in the district approved textbook, leads to higher order thinking, problem solving, and synthesizing of information. Again, we find instances where the "how" of the learning provides more education than the content of the "what." Students deserve the environment to collaboratively investigate, explore, and learn together, and that's exactly what needs to be established and fostered to transform students into lifelong learners.

Conclusion

No theory is an island, and no teacher is a representation of just one theory of thought. The best and most valuable learning experiences are ones that provide students with chances to learn from the teacher, their peers, and themselves through failures and successes. Learning is a fluid process, and teaching should reflect the same ideal. I carry with me my experiences and

methods for what I believe learners need today, and one day, those favored theories may change again to match my new learners, embrace something that has occurred in my career, and reflect my experiences. No theory is an island, and I am thankful for the roads that have brought me to the learning theories that full my classroom.

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